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THE EPISTLE TO THE BRETHREN OF MONT DIEU

THE GOLDEN EPISTLE
OF
ABBOT WILLIAM OF ST. THIERRY
TO THE
CARTHUSIANS OF MONT DIEU

NOW FIRST TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY

WALTER SHEWRING

AND EDITED BY

DOM JUSTIN McCANN

Diserta illa et plane aurea ad fratres de monte dei epistola.
MABILLON.

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INTRODUCTION

Books have their fates, said the old Roman writer, and is now remembered only in that aphorism. Few books can have had such various fortune as the *Epistle to the Brethren of Mont Dieu*, and few authors been so hardly treated as William of Saint Thierry. William wrote his *Epistle* in the middle of the twelfth century, and despatching it to the Carthusians of Mont Dieu, sent with it a covering letter, or preface, in which his authorship was plainly indicated. He was not long in his grave, and the twelfth century was not ended, before his preface had been mutilated and the *Epistle* transferred to the great name of his greatest friend, St. Bernard of Clairvaux. In the centuries which follow, though William is not entirely forgotten, that attribution to St. Bernard is dominant: in the widespread Latin copies, in early French and Italian versions, in the first printed editions. In the seventeenth century, thanks to a Cistercian scholar, Dom Bertrand Tissier, and to the great Benedictine, Dom John Mabillon, the *Epistle* is reclaimed for William and his right to the authorship seems firmly established. But the beginning of the eighteenth century sees it challenged again, by Mabillon's successor, and the *Epistle* now

assigned, not to St. Bernard, but to Dom Guigo, fifth Prior of the Grande Chartreuse. That attribution, though by no means generally accepted, prevails sufficiently to be taken over in the nineteenth century by the editors of Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, so that it is now enshrined and embedded in that vast repertory. And yet it is entirely erroneous; for modern scholarship, returning to the opinion of Mabillon, has confirmed and re-established his judgement that the *Epistle* is the work of William of St. Thierry and of none other.

Such have been the vicissitudes of the book in regard to the question of its authorship. That question apart, the *Epistle* may be said to have enjoyed excellent good fortune. Undoubtedly that good fortune has been in part due to the early and prevalent attribution to St. Bernard, and yet it is clear that the book has been valued also for its intrinsic quality. It was written at the very end of the "Benedictine centuries," on the eve of the coming of the Friars, and it is tempting to speak of it as the swan song of the old monachism. But that description would do justice neither to it nor to monachism. Rather it is an eloquent and persuasive summons to the life of religious perfection, a summons so fundamental in its character that it has appealed to the members of every Order and of none. It is natural to find it widely read among Carthusians, Cistercians and Benedictines; nor are we surprised to hear Mabillon calling it a golden epistle and a pattern of perfect monachism. But it is cited also and frequently, in the thirteenth century, by the great Franciscan Doctor, St. Bonaventure. In the four-

teenth and fifteenth centuries, reports Dom Wilmart, it enjoyed an immense credit among spiritual writers, so that Gerson counts it one of the essential authorities on contemplation; the Flemish mystic, Ruysbroeck, is beholden to it, and his disciples make explicit appeal to its authority; it is held in honour among the devout Canons of the Congregation of Windesheim, and there is at least one reminiscence of it in the *Imitation of Christ*. For the sixteenth century we have no less a disciple than the Jesuit saint, Aloysius Gonzaga. Cepari tells us that the *Epistle* was one of his favourite books, studied so long and so carefully that he knew it practically by heart. In the seventeenth century we meet it again in the *Secret Paths of Divine Love* of the Capuchin mystic, Father Constantine de Barbanson, and in the treatises of the English Benedictine, Father Augustine Baker, for there are as many as four citations from the *Epistle* in *Sancta Sophia*.

That brief outline will serve to show what has been the vogue of the *Epistle to the Brethren of Mont Dieu* during the eight centuries since its first writing. The manuscripts of our English libraries prove that it was well known in its Latin text to the monks of medieval England. But there is no trace of an English version, so that the translator may safely claim that this is the first appearance of the *Epistle* in our language. For that reason among others it seems necessary to introduce the author and his book at some length, and the reader will bear with us if we speak in detail about William of St. Thierry, about his claim to this *Epistle*, and finally about the *Epistle's* teaching.

. . . . .

§ 1.—The Life of William of St. Thierry

William of St. Thierry was born at Liège in the last quarter of the eleventh century.[1] There is no record of the exact year of his birth and his biographers are perforce content to suggest such dates as 1085 and 1090, but without claiming for them any authority beyond the authority of reasonable conjecture. It is even possible—it seems to us—that the date should be thrown back yet further still, to 1080 ; but no conclusive reasons can be given for that opinion, and the point is not one of great importance. Neither is there any absolute certainty regarding the year of his death ; but here we possess some more precise evidence and this points to the year 1148.[2] One of the most certain facts about William's life is his close association with St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), into whose orbit he was early drawn as an enthusiastic admirer and devoted friend. These two, to all appearance, were exact contemporaries ; and it is that parallelism of their lives, and not any precise record, which has suggested 1090 as the year of William's birth.[3] So, too, for his death year, we know

[1] There is very little written about William, and scarcely anything in English. In preparing this account of him I have studied his writings and consulted the standard books of reference, including in that term such a book as Vacandard's *Vie de St. Bernard*. I owe a special debt to the *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry* of M. l'abbé André Adam (1923).

[2] The Carthusian annals of Le Coulteux cite from a document once in the archives of Mont Dieu the date *circa tempora Remensis concilii sub Eugenio habiti*. The Council was held in 1148.

[3] But the impression given by their correspondence is that William was definitely the older man. Also, in his eleventh Meditation, which was written when he was still abbot, *i.e.*, before 1135, he can call himself an old man, which would certainly support 1080, if not an even earlier date.

that he died a very few years before St. Bernard, although he had expected to survive him. The same association with St. Bernard, which serves thus to determine the bounds of his life, has operated also in a way not entirely favourable to William of St. Thierry. As a devoted satellite to the great saint of Clairvaux, determined to revolve as closely as possible around his central sun, he has been hardly visible in the radiance of St. Bernard's fame. His genuine merits have been obscured, and his chief claim to attention become the circumstance that he wrote the first book of his friend's life. Nor is that all. However much he might desire to efface himself and promote the glory of his friend, yet his writings could not but be his own, the product of his own experience, thought and effort. But even here he has given way to St. Bernard, for several of his treatises were for some centuries very generally regarded as St. Bernard's work.

William, as we have said, was born at Liège in the last quarter of the eleventh century. The Norman Conquest of our island was then recent history, and the Conqueror himself was perhaps still on his throne. Of his childhood and youth we know nothing. The old Latin life, written probably by a monk of Signy towards the end of the twelfth century, is extant in only one exemplar, and of its two leaves the first is seriously damaged in its upper portion.[1] But enough of this first part of the life remains for us to learn that William was

[1] The leaves are at Paris, in MS. Latin 11782 of the Bibliothèque Nationale. A transcript has been published by the Bollandist, A. Poncelet, in *Mélanges Godefroid Kurth*, 1908. This old life was known to Mabillon and the other Maurists.

born at Liège and of noble parentage. There is also an imperfect sentence which must mean that he was as virtuous as he was nobly descended. And then follows a lacuna and silence, until we find him in the Benedictine Abbey of St. Nicasius at Rheims. After the manner of those days he had gone forth to seek education under one of the many teachers of the time. With him, as the companion of his studies, went one Simon, who was perhaps his brother, and who likewise became a Benedictine and an abbot. We do not know what teacher first attracted their youthful zeal for knowledge, but it is quite possible, as M. Adam suggests, that they made their studies at Laon, some thirty miles to the north-west of Rheims.

It was not yet the age of the great scholastics: that had still to come. The eleventh century, with its Lanfranc and Ivo of Chartres and Anselm of Canterbury, had just passed into the twelfth, "St. Bernard's century". We meet presently the names of Hugh of St. Victor, Abelard, Peter Lombard, Gratian, and many another name which is famous in the history of the schools; but these were precursors. It was a century which aimed at a synthesis and harmony of all that had gone before, and which thus provided an agreed basis for the supreme scholastics of the thirteenth. Gratian of Bologna wrote his *Decretum*, a summary and concord of the Canon Law; Peter Comestor his summary of Scripture knowledge, the *Historia Scholastica;* and Peter the Lombard the most influential of all these compilations, his famous *Four Books of Sentences* (*Quatuor libri sententiarum*). Legend afterwards associated these three, the authors of the standard manuals

of Canon Law, Scripture and Theology, as brothers, and even imagined them born at the same birth. They represent the most conspicuous achievement of the twelfth century round about its middle point and mark the rise of the Universities. But at the beginning of that century it was not Bologna, or Paris, which had the most noted teacher of the time, but Laon in Champagne, where Magister Anselmus, the pupil of St. Anselm and master of Abelard, was lecturing to throngs of scholars from France and Italy and England.

If we suppose then that William, in his choice of a teacher, followed the trend of his time, we shall put him at Laon under Anselm in the first decade of the twelfth century. His university years would be for him, as for other young men, a testing time, when the problems of life would face him in an acute form so as to strain both mind and will. In later life, when summoning St. Bernard to defend the faith against the errors of Abelard, he writes: "I too have loved him, and would wish to love him." [1] Perhaps it was at Laon that he first knew him and first encountered that bold speculation which was to lead Abelard into such troubled waters. It is possible that he himself now realised acutely the dangers that beset his faith. While, as for the moral conflict, we have these words of one of his Meditations: "Following my desires and the vanities of my heart I wasted my youth and almost took the way of the flesh." [2] So those years of study were

[1] In the letter which is printed among St. Bernard's and numbered 326. P.L. CLXXXII., col. 532.

[2] *Meditativæ Orationes*, IX., Migne, P.L., CLXXX., col. 233–234. The fourth Meditation and his Exposition of the Canticle of Canticles have even more explicit confessions. See *Med.* 216 A;

years of conflict, leading to a crisis. The issue may be expressed in those other words of the same Meditation: "I fled from them and took refuge with Thee, and Thou didst rescue me from the whirlpool of the world. I made compact with Thee, and did swear and resolve to observe the judgements of Thy justice." Together with his companion, Simon, he presented himself at the Abbey of St. Nicasius in Rheims, and asked for the Benedictine habit. That abbey, we are told, was held in good repute for its observance of rule and zeal for study.[1]

At what date did William take the Benedictine habit? We cannot say, except that it must have been in that first decade of the twelfth century. Nor can we give any detail about his life at St. Nicasius. The old biographer tells us that Simon and he made very perfect monks, and with that generality we must perforce be content. Yet we may suppose that William continued in the cloister the studies which he had begun outside it, and that it was in these years that he laid the foundations of the culture which later distinguishes him among his contemporaries. It is said that he rose to be Prior of his monastery, and then Abbot of Crespy, in

Cant. 524 C. We shall cite these treatises regularly thus, with the column number of Migne, P.L., CLXXX.

[1] It is perhaps unsafe to argue too strictly from the Meditations, which may be partly imaginative; yet I have formed the conviction that they contain an autobiographical element and throw some light on his life. The Fourth would seem to deal with his "conversion" and to indicate that he held a position of authority before he became a monk. Is it possible that he had been a priest and a teacher of others? See *Med.* 216. Of his monastic profession he writes in the Fifth: "I am con-crucified with Thee, Lord Jesus, on the cross of my profession, which daily and unceasingly I offer to Thee." *Med.* 219 B.

Hainault; but these statements rest on very uncertain evidence. We reach certainty only with his election, in the year 1119 or 1120, as Abbot of St. Thierry (Theodoric) in the neighbourhood of Rheims. That city is still the pivot of his activity, for from the "Golden Mount," upon which his abbey stood, Rheims lay in full view to the South.

William of Liège, as he may have been styled hitherto, has now become William of St. Thierry, and for some fifteen years he ruled his abbey and apparently ruled it well. The old biographer says that he was a zealous teacher, by word of mouth, of the Christian and monastic life, and was himself, by his example, a living pattern of the rule which he taught. His monastery, therefore, became known for its good observance, and he himself acquired the reputation of a good abbot. The regular discourses of an abbot to his community, dealing with the ordinary duties of the Christian and religious life, do not commonly reach publication, and the discourses of Abbot William are no exception. But he found time to write also more formal treatises and these have come down to us. To the time of his rule at St. Thierry (1120–1135) there are assigned four of his works: (1) *On Contemplating God;* (2) *On the Nature and Dignity of Love;* (3) *On the Sacrament of the Altar;* (4) *Meditative Prayers*, or *Meditations*.[1] The first and last are written in that style of mingled prayerful soliloquy and theological disquisition which is the style of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and the writer has evidently taken

[1] This is undoubtedly the most attractive of his writings. Dom Berlière (*L'ascèse bénédictine*, p. 94) calls the book, "a pearl of twelfth century asceticism." It deserves the highest praise if only that it gives a most attractive picture of a very candid soul.

St. Augustine for his model. But he is not an unoriginal plagiarist, and to the exposition of his thoughts he brings a clear and persuasive eloquence. The treatise on Love deserves, says the old biographer, the title of " Anti-Naso," for it lays down the principles of pure love, and refutes the impure doctrine of Ovid. The treatise on the Blessed Sacrament is occupied, for the most part, with the references to this Sacrament in the Fathers of the Church, and offers a reasoned explanation of the difficulties sometimes to be found in such references.

Besides this literary work and the duty of governing and teaching his monks, Abbot William had also to care for the rights and privileges of his abbey. Several times he had to invoke the authority of the Church against neighbouring nobles who had seized the property of the monastery. There are records of such action of his for the years 1125, 1129, and 1132. Other documents show him busy in other directions for the benefit of his abbey. Evidently it was no easy charge which he had upon him, and it is not surprising to find that he expresses a desire for peace and seclusion which grows stronger with the years of his rule. That desire was to lead him, in the end, to resign his office and to seek a life of greater silence and prayer; but it might never have had such an issue had not another and a very powerful influence joined forces with it.[1]

The influence which diverted William's life from its peaceful forward course and deprived St. Thierry of its

[1] The eleventh Meditation has much to say about his abbacy and its cares, and becomes in effect an argument for and against resignation. It concludes in favour of staying at his post.

abbot would seem to have begun to operate almost at the same time that he was elected to his abbacy. For it was about the year 1119 that William became acquainted with Bernard, the young abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Clairvaux, which had been founded only four years previously in a wild valley some eighty miles to the south-east of Rheims. In his Life of St. Bernard, William tells us of the meeting between Bernard and the Bishop of Châlons, the famous William of Champeaux, and how the bishop became Bernard's devoted friend. He tells us also that the Bishop of Châlons brought the news of Bernard and his Cistercians to the province of Rheims, and doubtless it was thus that William first heard of them.[1] In 1118–1119, broken down by his labours and austerities, Bernard was temporarily relieved of the charge of his monastery and was installed in a humble cottage in its precincts. It was while he was so living that William first visited him. We can give his own account of the visit :

At the same time I commenced myself to visit Clairvaux and Bernard. When I visited him one day there with another abbot, I found him living in that hut of his, which was like the hovels that are built for lepers at the cross-roads. As has been said, he had been relieved entirely of the charge of the monastery, by order of the bishop and the abbots, and I found him in this freedom, devoting himself solely to God and the affairs of his soul, as happy as a saint in paradise. As I entered that royal hut, and considered the nature of the dwelling and of him who dwelt in it, I call God to witness that I was filled with as much reverence as if I were going in to the altar of God. And I felt

[1] S. Bernardi *Vita Prima*, Lib. I., cap. VII., § 31. P.L. CLXXXV., col. 246. This shall be called henceforth simply *Vita Bernardi*.

such joy in the presence of that man, and so great a desire to share the poverty and simplicity of his life, that had the choice that day been given me, I would have chosen to stay there with him for ever and to serve him.[1]

This visit to Clairvaux was only the first of many, and William became the fast friend and enthusiastic admirer of Bernard, who returned his friendship with characteristic tenderness and generosity. Once when William had fallen ill of a long-drawn malady, Bernard sent his brother Gerard to St. Thierry to bring him to Clairvaux, promising him that he would either recover or die, and that quickly. Another man, says Dom Clément, might have been daunted by such an invitation, but William at once betook himself to Clairvaux, and there recovered his health. While he was still an invalid, Bernard too fell ill, and the friends spent long hours together "conversing the whole day long about the healing of the soul and about spiritual remedies for the sickness of sin." At the same time Bernard, he tells us, discoursed to him upon the *Canticle of Canticles*, and he took down his exposition each day lest he should forget anything of it.[2] In the letters which passed between the two friends we find the same evidence of their intimacy. "Brother Bernard of Clairvaux wishes you all that a friend can wish for a friend": such is the style of address which they use one to the other. And Bernard submits his writings to the judgement of William, and William his to Bernard. There is a long letter of

[1] *Vita Bernardi*, § 33. The biographers assert that William at the time of this visit was a simple monk at St. Nicasius; but the phrase "with another abbot" would appear to be in conflict with that view.
[2] *Vita Bernardi*, § 59.

Bernard's, of about the year 1125, from which it appears that William had written to complain to his friend of some imagined coldness in his friendship.[1] We should probably see in his complaint, not the morbid imagination of a sentimental love, but rather the humility of a sensitive spirit, scarce believing the miracle of Bernard's friendship. However that may be, Bernard's letter in reply, with its gentle rebuke of his fears and its doctrine of true friendship, must have reassured William and remains as a monument to their intimacy. He ends his letter in this fashion: "May God who gave you the desire, grant you also to fulfil all that you rightly wish for yourself and for your friends, O my loving and most reverend Father, who should be cherished by me with all the dues of friendship." Nor is the evidence of Bernard's affection towards him confined to their mutual correspondence, for we find it expressed in the saint's letters to others. He had sent a copy of a treatise to the Canon Regular, Oger, and Oger writes to tell him that he had shown it to Abbot William. "I am not displeased," answers St. Bernard, "for why should I be afraid that my little book should pass under the eyes of him, under whose gaze I would willingly spread my whole soul."[2] And, in the contemporary postscript of Abbot Burchard[3] to William's unfinished *Life* of St. Bernard,[4] we have the testimony of one who witnessed their familiar intercourse. "That faithful man (*i.e.* William)

[1] Ep. 85. P.L. CLXXXII., col. 206–210.
[2] Ep. 88. P.L. CLXXXII., col. 219.
[3] One of St. Bernard's novices, to whom there is a charming letter of his, Ep. 146.
[4] P.L. CLXXXV., col. 266.

had a special reason for writing Bernard's life, namely, the friendship and familiarity which had long joined him to the man of God. So great was the favour which he had with him, that there was scarce another to be found who shared with him so intimately the secrets of mutual affection and the delights of spiritual converse."

The friendship of William and Bernard, of a Benedictine and a Cistercian, beginning as it did about the year 1119, was practically contemporaneous in its unfolding with the explosion of that controversy between the monks of Cîteaux and Cluny which disturbed the monastic world of France during the third decade of the twelfth century. The Cistercian movement was inevitably a criticism of current Benedictine observance. The Benedictines of the day, while not in any real sense relaxed or corrupt, had yet in many ways tempered the ancient austerity. The Cistercian reform called for more frugality in food and dress, for more silence, for less sleep, for the reintroduction of manual labour. It criticised the lavish hospitality shown towards guests, the elaborate equipage of the abbot, the splendour of churches and monastic buildings. If this criticism had been expressed only in the language of fact, no controversy might have arisen. But apparently some ardent spirits among the Cistercians, not content with such tacit criticism, indulged in open censure and charged the Cluniacs with relaxation and luxury.[1] To this censure

[1] A charge of relaxation often suggests more than is intended. In this controversy there is no question of laxity with regard to anything but what is included under the general heading of

the Abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, made a vigorous reply, and while defending the black monks against the specific charges, accused the Cistercians in their turn of pharisaism, pride and all uncharitableness.[1] Peter's apology for the Cluniacs was addressed to St. Bernard, the natural protagonist of the Cistercians, and St. Bernard, though not responsible for the original censures and really deploring them, yet felt bound, at the instance of his friends, to write in his turn the famous *Apologia*. He begins with a vigorous repudiation of pharisaical criticism, and condemns those Cistercians who had indulged in it. He proclaims the most generous tolerance for every good form of the religious life.[2] And then he takes the observance of the Cluniacs, and shows point by point wherein he considered that it stood in need of improvement. St. Bernard's *Apology*, we are told, produced something like consternation among the Cluniacs, and is undoubtedly a strongly-worded document with many passages of eloquent exaggeration.[3] The ideal of the

monastic observance, and such observance admits of certain degrees. "You wear expensive clothes and eat elaborate meals and have gorgeous churches": that is the sort of thing the Cistercians were saying to the Cluniacs, and the worst they could say. This is plain from St. Bernard's *Apology*. See the commentary of Vacandard, *Vie de S. Bernard*, I., p. 118.

[1] Ep. 28. Migne. P.L. CLXXXIX., col. 112–159.

[2] *Laudo enim omnes Ordines et diligo, ubicumque pie et juste vivitur in Ecclesia. Unum opere teneo, ceteros caritate. Apologia*, cap. IV., no. 8. P.L. CLXXXII., col. 903.

[3] See Vacandard, *l. c.*, p. 126 ff. But let us not be thought to censure St. Bernard! Devout souls, says William in his *Life* of the saint, reverence his zeal; and how can other men blame him for it, when God is so manifestly with him? And, "Happy he whose only fault is a thing which others boast of." *Felix cui solum reputatur ad culpam, quod ceteri præsumere sibi solent ad gloriam*; a felicitous defence. P.L. CLXXXV., col. 251.

monastic life which is traced in it cannot be said to be in all points the necessary interpretation of St. Benedict's *Rule*, nor was it accepted as such by the Benedictines of the day. But on some points St. Bernard's criticism was just, and recognised as such by the criticised, for there is evidence of an effort towards the improvement of observance in regard to silence, frugality, etc. In the Order of Cluny Peter the Venerable continued his beneficent reforming work, which he had undertaken apart from this controversy, but which he pursued perhaps with the more zeal because of it. A Chapter of Benedictine Abbots, meeting at Soissons in 1130, by a happy gesture which would seem to show that the acute phase of the controversy was past, invited St. Bernard himself to sit with them and advise them.

In all this controversy Abbot William of St. Thierry was deeply interested. From his first meeting with St. Bernard he had been at heart a Cistercian, and now, when the trouble broke out, he made no secret of his sympathies. Benedictine abbot though he was, his was the chief influence that impelled St. Bernard to compose his *Apology*. He resented the criticism which had been aimed at his friend ; he wished him to justify himself and his cause in the eyes of all. St. Bernard on his part submitted the *Apology* to him for correction and approval, and finally dedicated it to him. To Benedictines indignant at the Cistercian censure, William must have appeared in the light of a traitor. And yet it seems probable that his action contributed to the final peace and to the reforming efforts of Soissons. But William was too convinced

an admirer of St. Bernard and his Order to be content with some measure of Benedictine reform. His heart was set on becoming himself a Cistercian, and, if St. Bernard had allowed it, he would have resigned his abbacy and joined him at Clairvaux. But that St. Bernard would not have. To one of William's appeals he makes this reply, in a letter written about the year 1130, perhaps just after the Chapter of Soissons :

> You wish to know what I should like you to do. But, if I told you, you would not be able to do it, nor would I advise it. For I should like you to do what I have long known that you yourself wish to do. But I think it safer for me, and more advantageous for you, if I put away all thought of my interest or yours, and recommend what I think God wants from you. My advice is, therefore, that you hold what you hold and stay where you are. Seek to benefit your subjects, and do not try to escape rule so long as you can benefit them. For woe to you, if you rule them and benefit them not; but greater woe, if fearing to rule them you refuse to benefit them.[1]

That is the language of prudence and spiritual good sense. St. Bernard believed in his own Cistercian rule, he had no scruple about receiving Benedictines who wished to pass over to it, and he would obviously have been glad to receive William also. Yet he would not have him leave his post at St. Thierry, where he was doing manifest good, in order to have greater austerity and more peace in some Cistercian cloister. However, in this point William finally decided that he could not be guided by his friend. Concerning the circumstances of his decision we know

[1] Ep. 86. P.L. CLXXXII., col. 210.

very little, beyond what has already appeared in his friendship with St. Bernard and his admiration for Cistercian observance. It is evident that he was a zealous monk, impatient of all relaxation. We may go further, and say that he was an idealist whose enthusiastic nature found the accommodations and compromises of actual life tiresome and unsatisfactory. As abbot he would have to rule a body of men of very varying character and of varying fervour, and it is possible that he found very difficult that flexibility and tolerance which are required—by St. Benedict himself—of the Benedictine abbot. It would seem also, from the ancient references to his act, that the chief thing he sought was seclusion and quiet, and we may detect in this desire some of the longing of the studious and contemplative spirit who finds himself immersed in an uncongenial life of action.[1] But however this may be, William made up his mind, and one day in the year 1135, taking with him one of his monks, he left St. Thierry and Champagne for the forest of the Ardennes, and became a simple monk in the Cistercian monastery of Signy, some forty miles to the North of Rheims. The monks of St. Thierry, assisted by the diocesan, made unavailing efforts to persuade him to return to them. St. Bernard on his part would seem to have accepted the issue, without any resentment that his advice had not been followed, for it is recorded that

[1] The old life says: *solitudinis etiam et spiritalis quietis accensus desiderio*, which seems an echo of Abbot Burchard's note to William's Life of St. Bernard: *desiderio solitudinis et quietis* (P.L. CLXXXV., col. 266). Another ancient reference says, *præ nimio desiderio perfectionis et exoptatæ paupertatis* (P.L. CLXXX., 343). After a careful study of his writings I believe his chief motive was the desire of closer union with God.

he obtained special privileges for his friend. So for the remaining thirteen years of his life, William, who had been some thirty years a Benedictine and fifteen years Abbot of St. Thierry, becomes in effect William of Signy—as he is styled in some of the manuscripts—a simple monk in an obscure Cistercian monastery.

The old biographer tells us that his first experience of the Cistercian régime almost broke his resolution; nor is that surprising. To take up a new and more austere life at the age of fifty and more, and with no very strong physique, was not an easy task, even with his enthusiasm. However, he persevered and presently, says the same biographer, his new life was lived "in a greater sweetness of spirit, in purity of body and soul, and in all perfection of virtues." It was especially in this period of his life, we may suppose, that he had that experience in prayer and contemplation which is reflected in the *Epistle* and particularly in the rapt eloquence of its concluding chapter. At the same time also, unable to take his full share in the manual labour of the monastery, he devoted himself with special industry to the business of writing. Of the total number of fifteen treatises which are correctly assigned to him, eleven belong to this final stage at Signy. Of these four are scriptural commentaries, and the others are *Sentences about Faith*, *Of the Nature of the Body and Soul*, *Against Peter Abelard*, the *Mirror of Faith*, the *Riddle of Faith*, the *Epistle to the Brethren of Mont Dieu*, the unfinished *Life of St. Bernard*. The abbey of Signy had been founded only a few months before William joined it, and the Chronicle of Signy, after recounting the history of the foundation, goes

straight to William: "At that time Dom William, abbot of St. Thierry, leaving his abbacy became a monk in the monastery of Signy, in order that he might in greater seclusion give himself the more devoutly and fervently to divine contemplation. He was a man of great piety and virtue, and was regarded as very skilled in letters." His extant works sustain this description, and it is significant also that when the Cistercian abbots looked round their body for one who might record the life and acts of St. Bernard, their choice fell upon William, so that his last years were devoted to the task of writing the life of his friend. It must have appeared, when he undertook the work, that he would survive Bernard, but he died five years before him and his record—the First Book of the *Vita Prima*—goes no further than the year 1130. However, so far as it goes, it is of primary value, and is moreover the attractive record of a devoted friend.

Of the other works we shall say nothing, except to draw attention to one which brought him again into close relations with St. Bernard, his treatise against Abelard. From his retreat at Signy he discerned the dangers of Abelard's latest teaching, and drawing up a careful summary of his erroneous or doubtful propositions, appealed to St. Bernard to take up the defence of the orthodox faith. His treatise sounded the alarm, and set in train the course of events which led to Abelard's condemnation at the Council of Sens in 1140. From this and from St. Bernard's general attitude towards him, it is evident that William was regarded by his contemporaries as a man of considerable learning and ability. That judgement is borne out by his

writings, which show him well-read in the Scriptures and Fathers of the Church, and able to expound his views in a sound and fluent Latin. He has not the same charm of language as St. Bernard, nor the same easy movement; but if his prose be colder and less stirring, it is genuinely eloquent. He has a strong mystical trend, but does not indulge in vague imaginings, and in his spiritual advice is conspicuously prudent. It has been said of him with some justice that of all the writers of that century he is the one who comes nearest to St. Bernard. Neither he nor St. Bernard thought very much about style or literary eminence, but William would certainly be content that we should thus associate him with his friend.

It was at a later date, probably in the year 1145, and before he had begun to write St. Bernard's life, that William composed the *Epistle*. The Charterhouse of Mont Dieu (founded in 1137) was situated some thirty miles to the east of Signy. That was no great distance to travel, and there was a special reason which may have tempted William to his visit. The Abbot Joran, of St. Nicasius, who had been the abbot of his own early years, had after thirty-seven years of rule resigned his abbacy and retired to Mont Dieu. We are told, further, that many other religious of the province of Rheims had likewise entered that charterhouse. When William decided, taking advantage of the privilege which St. Bernard had obtained for him, to leave Signy and visit Mont Dieu, he could therefore expect to meet there at least one old friend. It is plain from his preface to the *Epistle* that his visit was a happy one. On his return to Signy, in gratitude

for his entertainment, he sent to Mont Dieu copies of all his writings and his latest treatise, written specially for "Brother Stephen and his fellow juniors," the *Epistle to the Brethren of Mont Dieu.* The *Epistle* expresses the greatest admiration for the Carthusian life, and has given some readers the false impression that the author was himself a Carthusian. Is it possible that William was genuinely attracted to the Carthusian life, won by the spectacle of an austerity more complete even than that of the Cistercians, and therefore wrote with such obvious sincerity of feeling?[1] It may be so; yet, however much attracted, he did not seek once more to change his Order, but returned to Signy there to spend the last few years of his life. In the letter itself he tells us that he is old and infirm (*senex et deficiens*), for he had now (probably) passed his sixtieth year. With failing strength he set himself to his last work, the *Life of St. Bernard.* Presently he fell into his last sickness and made a devout end, on the 8th of September in the year 1148. His memory was venerated at Signy and throughout the Cistercian Order. It is thus celebrated in the Cistercian Menology of Henriquez:

"In France the Blessed William, sometime abbot of St. Thierry, monk of Signy in the diocese of Rheims, united by ties of the closest friendship to our Father, St. Bernard, whose life he wrote. He was distinguished for piety and learning, and so given to contemplation that he was often rapt in ecstasy. His sanctity was attested by many miracles both before and after his death, and his memory is held in great veneration."[2]

[1] See the concluding sentences of the fourteenth chapter (§ 48).
[2] Henriquez, *Menologium Cisterciense*, Antwerp, 1630, pp. 14–15.

§ 2.—The Authorship of the Epistle.

After this account of the life of William of St. Thierry, we must now establish his claim to the authorship of the *Epistle*.[1] To give the reader at once a rapid view of the situation we may for the moment neglect the MSS. and set out the history of the fortunes of the *Epistle* in the printed editions in the following table :

A. All the early editions, from the invention of printing to the middle of the seventeenth century, print the *Epistle* with the short preface and attribute it to St. Bernard.

B. The Cistercian edition of Tissier (*Bibliotheca Patrum Cisterciensium*, 1662) and the Benedictine (Maurist) editions of Mabillon (*Opera S. Bernardi*, 1667 and 1690) print the *Epistle* with the long preface (three times as long as the other) and attribute it to William of St. Thierry.

C. The third Benedictine edition (1719), prepared by Dom Massuet, returns to the short preface, divides the *Epistle* into two books (as in some MSS.) and adds an entirely new " third book," attributing the whole to Dom Guigo, the fifth Prior of the Grande Chartreuse. The so-called third book is really by St. Anselm of Canterbury, and we shall say no more about it. Unfortu-

[1] For this section I owe a great debt to three essays by Dom Wilmart : *Les écrits spirituels des deux Guigues* (*Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, April, 1924) ; *La préface de la lettre aux frères de Mont-Dieu* (*Revue Bénédictine*, May, 1924) ; *La série et la date des ouvrages de Guillaume de Saint-Thierry* (*Revue Mabillon*, July, 1924).

nately it is this edition (in the main) which has been printed in Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, a circumstance which has caused Guigo's claim to be widely accepted.

D. The present English translation, going back to Class B and the text of Mabillon, uses the long preface, discards the "third book" of Massuet-Migne, and attributes the *Epistle* to William of St. Thierry. For the first time in any printed edition of the *Epistle* the address is correctly given. For this, and for the preface, the translator has used the critical text published by Dom Wilmart in the *Revue Bénédictine*.[1]

From this summary it will appear that there are three claimants to the authorship: William of St. Thierry, St. Bernard and Dom Guigo. The claim of St. Bernard, though very widespread in the MSS. (from the twelfth century onwards) and recognised by all the early editions, has had no advocate since the seventeenth century and need not be discussed at length. It conflicts with the true address and preface—which shall be explained presently—and could only pass muster with the mutilated preface. Moreover, the style of the *Epistle* is not St. Bernard's style. The attribution probably began in a scribe's error, and

[1] The text followed for the Preface is Dom Wilmart's, for the *Epistle* Mabillon's (1690). Wherever another reading has been followed the fact is mentioned in the notes. For a few passages, in which the text seemed faulty, the following Oxford manuscripts have been consulted:

(1) MS. Hatton 102 (thirteenth century).
(2) MS. Auct. D.5.5 (thirteenth century).
(3) MS. Canon. Pat. Lat. 116 (fifteenth century).
(4) S. John's College, MS. 206 (thirteenth century).

once started on its way would itself cause its wide diffusion. The error was an easy one, because St. Bernard *had* visited Mont Dieu and *had* written an Epistle to Carthusians (of the Grande Chartreuse, Ep. XI. of about 1125).

Dom Guigo cannot plead such long prescription in his favour as can St. Bernard, for his claim does not appear to have had any serious currency until it was taken up by Dom Massuet and by his means was embodied in the Benedictine edition of 1719. But Dom Guigo, though a late starter, may be said to have far outstripped his rivals, for since Migne accepted his claim he has been very generally regarded as the author. But not universally, for Dom Clément, of the *Histoire littéraire*, had positively refused to accept the attribution,[1] and now critical authority has turned strongly, and probably finally, against it.

The genesis of the attribution to Dom Guigo is as follows: Dom Martène, working in 1708 among the MSS. of the Cistercian monastery of Pontigny, found a copy of the *Epistle* bearing the remarkably early date of 1156, in which it was attributed to Dom Guigo. Another manuscript, of Châlis, of the twelfth century likewise, bore the same attribution. Martène communicated his discovery to Massuet, and Massuet on the strength of these two early MSS. revised Mabillon's work and produced the edition which is now to be seen in Migne.

The chief objections to Dom Guigo's claim are as follows: (1) The Epistle is addressed to a "Prior H,"

[1] See especially the emphatic two pages of tome XI. (1759), pp. 654–655.

of Mont Dieu, by a writer whose initial is W, all of which is admitted by Massuet. Granting that W may stand for Willelmus or for Guigo (in the form Wigo), the "Prior H" can only be Prior Haymo, whose dates are 1144–1151. But Dom Guigo died in 1137, and so cannot have written to Prior Haymo. It is really impossible to surmount this chronological difficulty. (2) The *Epistle* was not written by a Carthusian, in spite of superficial appearances, but by a non-Carthusian friend. The exordium, for instance, with its almost flamboyantly laudatory address to the brethren of Mont Dieu, is couched in terms which would not come naturally from any Carthusian, but could not possibly have come from Guigo, who was wont to style himself the "humble prior of the poor Carthusians" and who dreaded praise as the most insidious enemy of their institute. (3) The *Epistle* was written by some one who had just visited Mont Dieu; but the Prior of the Grande Chartreuse was forbidden to leave the precincts of his monastery and could not have made such a visit. (4) The writer of the *Epistle* regards himself as living in the same region as the Carthusians of Mont Dieu, and that a milder region than the Alpine region of the Grande Chartreuse (§ 7). (5) The attribution to Guigo cannot be reconciled with the long preface, which is the authentic one (as shall be seen presently); or with the language and thought of the *Epistle*.

How are we to explain the attribution of the MSS. of Pontigny and Châlis (now both lost)? The second was most probably a copy from the first, so that we have to deal merely with one witness for Guigo's

claim, a very early witness (within a dozen years of the original), but yet an isolated one. Dom Wilmart considers that the attribution to Guigo, made plausible by the seeming Carthusianism of the writer, is no more than the attempt of a scribe to make more explicit the vague initials of the authentic address. For the "W" which he found in his exemplar the scribe boldly wrote Guigo, and then inserted the same name in other parts of his copy.

To turn now to the arguments in favour of the attribution to William of St. Thierry. (1) Positive ancient attribution. The *Epistle* is attributed to William by the important twelfth-century MS. of Signy (now Charleville 114) which also has the long preface; and this attribution occurs in other good MSS. of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[1] It is attributed to him also in the twelfth-century *Life*, which was almost certainly written at Signy. It is included in a list of his writings (of unknown origin) which is in the *Liber Legendarum* of St. Thierry, now at Rheims, written in a fifteenth-century hand. (2) Diction and thought. There are abundant parallels between the vocabulary and teaching of the *Epistle* and those of William's undisputed writings.[2] Many of these parallels have been noted by Dom Wilmart for the preface alone, and a few more for the *Epistle* proper are given in the notes to this translation.

[1] In the forms *Epistola domni Willelmi quondam abbatis sancti Theoderici ad fratres de monte dei* and *Epistola domni Willelmi Signiacensis ad sanctos fratres Karthusienses*.

[2] This is not an exaggerated statement. I believe that parallels of diction and phrase could be found for every paragraph of the *Epistle*.

A specially interesting one, concerning the passage which troubled Gerson, is mentioned in the third section of this Introduction. (3) The address agrees exactly with the attribution to William. (4) But the most decisive argument in his favour is the authentic preface, with which we must deal at some length.

The preface, or covering letter, which the writer sent with his *Epistle*, exists in the MSS. in two forms : (*a*) the longer form, which has been used for this translation, rarer and yet extant in a sufficient number of good MSS. ; (*b*) the shorter form, consisting of the first two sections only, and with the words *aliud quoddam opusculum*, *i.e.* "another work," omitted from the beginning of the second section. Both forms go back to the twelfth century. If the long form be the genuine one there can be no question about the authorship of the *Epistle*, for the preface then contains a careful list of William's other works, and is in effect an elaborate signature of the *Epistle* by him. Which is the authentic preface ? Can the additional sections of the long preface be the work of a clever interpolator, and be here manifestly out of place, as Dom Massuet argued ? The hypothesis is a very improbable one. But, apart from all other considerations, there is evidence in the short preface to show that it is incomplete, as the reader may perceive for himself without very much trouble. Let him read the first two sections and then pass on to the third section, where the alleged interpolation begins. He will see that the second section demands the third as its necessary complement and is most aptly and correctly completed

by it. Even if the words " another work " are removed from the second section, it is plain that the section refers, not to the *Epistle*, but to that work on faith which is fully described in the third section. And the third section having been established as authentic, the rest follows.

What is the explanation of the short preface and of its greater currency in the manuscript tradition? Dom Wilmart suggests that the Carthusians of Mont Dieu, who as the original recipients of the letter would also be the chief source of copies of it, were themselves responsible for its shortening. They wished their brethren in other houses, and their friends, to benefit by the spiritual teaching of the *Epistle*, and so they copied it for them. But what need to copy the latter part of the preface, which did not concern the *Epistle*, but was no more than an inventory of William's writings? That inventory was in place in the original preface, because it had accompanied a gift of those writings, but what point would it have for other readers?[1] So they made their " cut " and sent out the shortened preface, with results unfortunate to the author. But in their shortening of the preface they were not drastic enough; for inadvertently, perhaps thinking that it referred to the *Epistle*, they spared a paragraph (the second section), which really refers to William's treatise on faith (consisting of the two parts distinguished in the third section), and therefore belongs to the inventory. Thus the short preface, if carefully examined, betrays its fragmentary character

[1] Except for William's friends. Note that the twelfth century MS. of Signy is a chief witness for the long preface.

and demands just such a complement as it receives from the missing sections.

Whatever truth there may be in this suggestion regarding the circumstances of the shortening, there can now be no doubt that the preface *was* shortened at a very early date, and that the shortened form obtained the greater vogue, all the greater because it had made possible the attribution to St. Bernard. With the re-establishment of the authenticity of the long preface there can no longer be any dispute regarding the authorship, which must be definitively assigned to William of St. Thierry.

§ 3.—The Teaching of the Epistle

In several manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the *Epistle to the Brethren of Mont Dieu* bears a secondary title: it is a treatise *Of the Solitary Life* (*De vita solitaria*). That title is not an authentic one, for William seems to have given his work no title whatever; but it is not inapt, for the *Epistle* is addressed to a community of Carthusians and purports to give a programme for their solitary form of the religious life. Yet it would be a mistake to limit the *Epistle* to Carthusians, and in that respect the title is misleading. As the old biographer says, the treatise "though addressed specially to the Carthusians of Mont Dieu, is suitable for all who seek perfection in the religious state." In a striking passage (§ 28) William tells his Carthusian reader that he has two cells: the outer cell of stone and mortar in which his body dwells, and the inner cell of conscience where

his soul should dwell in communion with God.[1] That second cell, the cell of recollection, is possible to many others than Carthusians, and indeed is not confined to any Order or to any state of life. In the same way, throughout the treatise, William's sure insight penetrates beyond accidental forms to the essential and universal, making plain the substance of the perfect Christian life, a life in which neither Carthusian nor other religious has any monopoly. So we may fairly say that the *Epistle* transcends the circumstances for which it was written and becomes of far wider scope. If we were to give it a title other than the one it now bears, we should call it *Of the Perfect Life ;* it is a short guide to Christian and religious perfection.

What then is William's conception of the perfect life ? A detailed analysis of the argument of the *Epistle* is given in the *Analytical Contents* and shall not be repeated here ; but we may draw attention to the main lines of his teaching. It will be noticed that the *Epistle* has a certain logical structure—not too strictly adhered to—which is provided by his classification of three states of soul : animal, rational and spiritual (*cf.* St. Paul's flesh, mind and spirit), which correspond to three classes of persons : beginners, proficients and perfect.[2]

[1] On the remarkable similarity to the teaching of St. Catherine of Siena see the note on that passage. William speaks of the " hermit heart " in *Cant.* 482 D ; *cor etiam in multitudine solitarium ;* and gives an example of such recollection in the person of St. Bernard in *Vita Bernardi*, 241 A. For the man who cannot practise it even in solitude, but is his own crowd, see *Vita Bernardi*, 248 B.

[2] Some references are given in the notes to the text. " Proficients " is not a very satisfactory rendering of the Latin *proficientes* " progressors," since it now commonly implies perfection.

But such classifications can never be exact, and William recognises that no precise line separates the classes, so that each group of persons may in fact transgress the boundaries of his state.[1] In the first state—the animal or sensual state—the beginner lives very much by his senses and for his senses. He has to get out of that state, and the best thing for him, since he cannot yet guide his life by his own reason, is to put himself, in unquestioning obedience, under the guidance of another. William gives much further advice for the training of the novice in regard to mortification of the body and the ordinary monastic exercises, but the main thing is obedience. If he works hard he will in time subject his members to the service of God and that service will become a delight. He is then ready to pass on to the rational state.

In the "rational state" the proficient, *i.e.*, the man who has made some progress in the spiritual life, works with intelligence and will on the doctrines of the faith and on the acquisition of virtues. In particular he strives to grow more and more like to God, so that he may be united to Him. When that likeness has grown very real in him, then the Holy Spirit pours out upon him His special gifts, and reason and will are sanctified and transformed. He now possesses wisdom (*sapientia*) and the perfect love which is called charity. In this state he will be occupied with the contemplation of God in His sublime attributes and with a constant loving of that infinite Goodness and Beauty. This contemplation and love are exercised by him under the

[1] And the same person may fluctuate between the states. See the beginning of § 35.

influence of the Holy Spirit, who becomes in effect the chief principle of his spiritual life. It is this operation of the Spirit, bringing illumination and inspiring love, which chiefly distinguishes his "spiritual state" from the "rational state" which preceded it. He has the same reason and the same will as before, but they are transformed by the influence of the Spirit, so that his life becomes truly a life of the spirit.

From this outline of the three "states" it will be seen that William regards the spiritual life as a progress from sense to spirit, from earthly things to God. He conceives it, in particular, as a growing like to God, and "likeness to God is man's perfection" (§ 62). Of this likeness, or similitude, there are three degrees. The lowest likeness is a natural one, which being necessary and independent of our will, cannot be claimed by us as any merit. It is merely this, that the soul's relation to the body—whole in the whole and whole in every part—is analogous to God's omnipresence. The second and better likeness is that of virtue, in which a man strives to be like to the infinite Good in His Goodness and in the unchangeableness of His Goodness. Above that is the third and ultimate likeness, when the perfect soul not only wills what God wills, but seems unable to will otherwise. Goodness has become so natural to him and so much a part of him, and he cleaves so ardently to the immutable Good, that he also seems to partake of that immutability. Just as God is by nature His own Goodness and there is no discord or change possible within the Divine Being, so by grace and the operation of the Holy Spirit, a similar equation and a similar stability

seem to be realised in the perfect soul. When a soul has attained that pitch of sanctity, then is the likeness to God a perfect likeness, so perfect that we ought rather to call it a unity of spirit. That unity of spirit is the climax of all our spiritual endeavour.

In the course of his exposition of this supreme likeness William uses phrases which express so close a union of the perfect soul with God that already in the fifteenth century Gerson uttered a note of warning. His words are far from being a condemnation, for all that he says is that the *Epistle* in this matter should be read with caution, which is good advice. But that warning of Gerson would seem to have fastened on the *Epistle* a certain vague suspicion of unorthodoxy, which in our own time has hardened into a definite censure. For the able historian of Christian spirituality, M. Pourrat, puts the *Epistle* in a class by itself with the damnatory heading "*La mystique hétérodoxe au XII^e siècle*," finding in it a savour of pantheism and the dangerous doctrine that the mystic becomes impeccable.[1] That classification has evoked strong protests from such authorities as M. Viller and Dom Wilmart; nor does it receive any countenance from Dom Berlière in his *L'ascèse bénédictine* (1927) or from M. Vernet in *La spiritualité médiévale* (1928), both of whom speak of the *Epistle* in the highest terms. To Dom Berlière, who cites him frequently, William is "that great

[1] *La spiritualité chrétienne*, II. (1924), pp. 194–196. He treats the *Epistle* as of uncertain authorship, and is unable to judge it against the background of its author's other writings. William of St. Thierry is barely mentioned by him (p. 95), and there is in a footnote a very imperfect list of his works, which are evidently unfamiliar to him. A general history is bound to have such *lacunæ*, but this is a specially serious one.

master of the spiritual life." To M. Vernet the *Epistle* is "one of the essential books of medieval spirituality." But let us be quite fair to M. Pourrat. His criticism is too severe, as we hope to show; but he had some excuse for it. For he had to treat the *Epistle* as an anonymous and unrelated document, and there is enough in its pregnant and daring sentences to arrest a critic who knew nothing of its author's other writings. And that is not all. The charge of pantheism is, as we hope to show, a false one; but not so the other charge, for William seems certainly to have held an unusual view regarding the perfection which could be attained by the mystic. Let us first briefly dispose of the charge of pantheism and then devote rather more space to the other.

The charge of pantheism, or a pantheistic savour, is based on the language of section 62 (anticipated in section 42), in which he teaches that the soul becomes in an ineffable way "one spirit" with God. St. Paul had said: *He that cleaveth to the Lord is one spirit* (1 Cor. vi. 17), and that text is constantly present to William's mind and the phrase "one spirit" constantly used by him (see *Cant.* 505, 506, 519 B, 520 A). For him the great Master of the spiritual life is the Holy Spirit, whom he seems to identify with divine charity, and the great fact of the perfect life is the indwelling of the Spirit. But he never loses sight of the transcendence of God, and even when he is insisting on His immanence he is careful to say that His indwelling is of grace and not of nature.[1] To prove his complete orthodoxy and freedom from all suspicion of pantheism

[1] As he says explicitly in this § 62.

it would be necessary to cite largely from such expositions of Trinitarian doctrine as he gives in his *Enigma Fidei* and *Contra Abelardum*. But a simpler and shorter method is provided for us by a passage of his *Speculum Fidei* (391–394), which is an ampler statement of the doctrine of the incriminated section of the *Epistle*.[1] The passage is too long to quote in full, but we may summarise its teaching as follows: We have a natural love which of itself is not much worth. But as the soul quickens the body, so God's Love may come and quicken that natural love and transform it. The more perfectly this happens, the better is our love and the higher our state. The Love of God, that is the Holy Spirit, may in the end so transform our love that we become one spirit with God. When that has happened our soul is transmuted, not into the divine nature, yet into a super-human, less than divine, beatitude, into the joy of illuminating grace and the experience of the illuminated mind.[2] For with this transformation go, momentarily at least, a deeper knowledge and certain glimpses of eternal truth. All this is the work of God through the Holy Spirit. But if the Spirit dwells in us and unites us to God and gives us this mystical experience, yet His indwelling in us is not to be equated with His indwelling in the Blessed Trinity. It is an entirely different thing in the Blessed Trinity, where He is consubstantially one with the Father and

[1] The *Epistle* at this point reads like a *précis* of the other treatise. We should remember that it was written about the same time and that the other treatises were sent with it to Mont Dieu.

[2] *Non quidem in naturam divinitatis, sed tamen in quamdam supra humanam, citra divinam, formam beatitudinis, in gaudium illuminantis gratiæ et sensum illuminatæ conscientiæ* (391 D).

the Son, and in the human soul, with which He is one by grace. The indwelling in the creature is by grace and operation; but in the Blessed Trinity the Holy Spirit is of the same nature and substance as Father and Son. The grace of sanctity is a marvellous condescension of the Creator to His creature.

Such is the teaching of *Speculum*, and we think it disposes of the charge of pantheism. But let us cite one more passage in which he puts his doctrine into a concise form: "The Holy Spirit, the unity of Father and Son, is also the love and likeness of God and man. But in one way in the Supreme Essence and in a different way in the lower nature." [1] His meaning is clear, and there is no sort of confusion of the human and the divine. In the century in which he wrote, theological teaching concerning the Holy Spirit and His gifts had not acquired that precision which it was to get at the hands of St. Thomas in the next century. We must not quarrel with William when he is endeavouring to express the ineffable experience of the mystical union in human language. If he is sometimes obscure, that is inevitable. If individual expressions seem too strong, after all the use of such expressions is a recognised privilege of the mystics.

Let us now deal with the second charge, that he teaches the impeccability of the mystic. The offending passage runs as follows:

> But unity of spirit in a man that upward lifteth his heart is the perfection of the will that advanceth unto God, when now he not only willeth that which God

[1] *Sed aliter in summa essentia, aliter in inferiori natura. Enigma* 399 D.

willeth, but is so much—I say not affected but perfected in affection, that he is not able to will anything save that which God willeth. For to will that which God willeth is to be now like unto God; but to be unable to will anything save that which God willeth, this is to be that which God is, in whom to will and to be are the same. (§ 61.)

Before attempting any commentary on this doctrine, we should like to adduce a very similar passage from his treatise on the *Nature and Dignity of Love* where he speaks thus of perfect love:

The just and holy soul is now become so virtuous, that just as in God to be is to be good, so in it to be is to be holy and just and pious: holy in itself, just to all, pious to God. For, by the increase of the grace of God, the just soul is made so just, that in no part of itself, whether thought, feeling, or act, can it know or be otherwise than just, for it is completely and immutably disposed in all that is justice. Whence the Apostle says: *Charity never falleth away.* It may sometimes stumble, and sometimes will or deed may go astray from the path, so long as in this life charity can see only in part and through a mirror in a dark manner; yet its disposition abides always whole and stable in its virtue.[1]

There is a strong family likeness between that passage and the sentences of the *Epistle*, a likeness which is plainer still in the Latin text. That is further evidence for William's authorship of the *Epistle*. Let us be allowed to cite one more passage, this time from a work which is only doubtfully his. In that compendium of St. Bernard's Sermons on the Canticle which has also been known as the *De triplici statu* we

[1] *De natura et dignitate amoris.* P.L. CLXXXIV., col. 388–389.

read the following sentence, describing the perfection of the "spiritual state":

The holy soul being made one spirit (*unus spiritus*) with God, can no more endure to deviate one jot from justice, than justice itself can endure to cease to be justice.[1]

What then are we to make of this insistence upon the stability of the saint in righteousness? He attributes that stability to the grace of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: of that there is no doubt. And the whole tenour of the *Epistle*, with its constant teaching of humility and its constant exhortation to fidelity, implies the possibility of sin and falling from grace. But if we say that he means only that as long as the soul is faithful to grace, so long does this state of righteousness abide, we are attributing to him a platitude and there is no sufficient reason for his emphasis. We venture with all modesty to offer the following two explanations of his doctrine. Our first explanation is that William, considering the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the saintly soul and the sanctity that results from that indwelling, regards it as a practical impossibility that such a soul should turn from God. Sin is still a theoretical possibility; but it is highly improbable, and it may be said that the soul is "unable to will anything save that which God willeth." That is our first, and "more benign" interpretation, and on this interpretation William is well within the bounds of orthodoxy.

[1] P.L. CLXXIV., 409 B. I cite this passage because it seems to me to support the attribution of the piece to William. The teaching is not St. Bernard's.

Our second explanation is as follows : In the second passage quoted above William apparently allows of sin, but teaches that it does not disturb the stable disposition of the saintly soul. Citing St. Paul's *Charity never falleth away*, and going on in the same context to cite that dangerous text of St. John (1 John iii. 9), *Whosoever is born of God committeth not sin ; for his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God*, he argues that perfect charity is a stable thing which persists even in sin. Thus " Peter when he sinned did not lose charity." This opinion is noticed and rejected by St. Thomas Aquinas.[1] One act of mortal sin, maintains St. Thomas, entails the loss of charity. Peter's sin, he agrees, was not directly against charity, and he quickly recovered charity by his true repentance ; but he had certainly lost it, for any grave sin is wholly inconsistent with charity. If charity could be regarded as an " acquired virtue " then it would be true that it would not be destroyed by one or two contrary acts. But charity is an " infused virtue," with a necessary supernatural and divine character, and it cannot coexist with any serious sin whatever. So St. Thomas. Now it is in the distinction which is here made by St. Thomas that we seem to see the explanation of William's doctrine. His idea of charity is not St. Thomas's. He thinks of it rather as a strong habit of love, embedded in thought and will, which has become second nature to the perfect soul, and he affirms that that basic disposition cannot be disturbed no matter what happens on the surface. If there is a temporary deflection from God, yet the

[1] *Secunda secundæ*, Q. xxiv., Art. 12.

soul will presently swing back again, and again point to Him with all the energy of its love. And, even in its deflection, when forces which do not belong to its true self turn it from its pole, even then it may be said to be loving God and striving to get to Him. *Our hearts cannot rest until they rest in Thee.* Like St. Paul, he had experienced the conflict of flesh and spirit, and to him as to St. Paul the flesh seemed an alien principle. But, in spite of it, his love of God had not failed. "My spirit always loved Thee, even when my flesh neglected Thee." [1] It is this personal experience which he is striving to express. His doctrine has nothing to do with impeccability; but it verges on the mysterious regions of vocation and predestination. We had best leave it there; but we hope that William is absolved from all taint of heresy.

However, before continuing, we may be allowed to indicate a parallel to William's teaching in a somewhat unexpected quarter. The thirty-seventh chapter of the *Revelations* of Dame Julian of Norwich (fourteenth century) has this title: "God keepeth his chosen full securely, although they sin; for that in these is a godly will, that never assenteth to sin." [2] And the text has: "For in every soul that shall be saved is a godly will that never assented to sin, nor ever shall. Right as there is a beastly (*i.e.*, carnal) will in the lower part that may will no good, right so there is a godly will in the higher part, which will is so good that it may never will ill, but

[1] P.L. CLXXX., col. 234. *Semper autem spiritus meus te dilexit, tiam cum caro neglexit.*

[2] *Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. Hudleston (1926), p. 93. See the editor's comment in his Introduction.

ever good." Compare this with William's doctrine, in particular with his epigrammatic, "My spirit always loved Thee, even when my flesh neglected Thee," and it will seem not unreasonable to suppose that Dame Julian also should be counted among our author's disciples.

One further point of William's teaching, and this already over-long Introduction will end. No account of a spiritual writer can very well omit reference to his view of prayer, and something must now be said about that. William presumes in his disciple a constant exercise of prayer, not only in the Divine Office and other prayers of rule, but also in private prayer. He defines piety as "a continual remembrance of God, a constant effort to know Him, a tireless exercise of love towards Him." Each state of the spiritual life will have its suitable subjects for meditation. The novice must be taught to raise his heart to God and to pray in a spiritual manner, banishing as far as possible all crude, bodily images. In the second state, the effort to know God and love Him must be pushed further and further, until the soul reaches the wisdom and charity of the final state; and with this effort goes a constant effort of prayer. William distinguishes four sorts of prayer: petition, supplication, thanksgiving and communion. By the last he means (as he says) a "pure prayer" which is nothing but an intimate communing with God. "He is the bridegroom and she is the bride and that is their mutual converse" (*Cant.* 479 B). That pure prayer is also "an affection of a man clinging to God and a familiar and devout converse and a resting of the illuminated mind in fruition." It is sometimes given to

the mere beginner, the servant being sometimes bidden to the son's table. It is always God's gift, His precious gift to whom He will. And in it the soul will enjoy from time to time certain passing glimpses of the light of God's countenance, and these will stimulate it to greater effort in the work of purification and do more then anything else to increase its likeness to God. This "fruition" of God may be lawfully hoped for, and sought after, by the spiritual man, and it is indeed the greatest joy that can come to him in this life. And yet it is sweet pain also. For he must perforce return to himself and to the light of every day. But even so his life will be a contemplation of God in His sublime attributes, and a constant loving of that infinite Goodness and Beauty. The intimate converse of his prayer will continue and he will look forward with earnest longing to the uninterrupted vision of heaven.

In his treatise on Contemplation, William speaks explicitly of the special visitation of God that comes in pure prayer, and his words would seem to suggest—as indeed do the similar references in the *Epistle*—his own personal experience: "Sometimes, Lord, Thou sendest into my heart a something I know not what. I experience a savour so sweet and comforting that were it fulfilled in me I would seek nothing more. Thou dost not permit me to learn what it is: by no vision of the eye, or feeling, or understanding. I would hold it fast and savour it, but it passeth swiftly. Whatever it be, I accept it, hoping that it will profit me to eternal life. But would that I could keep it longer, and transmit its power into the veins and marrow of my soul, so that

all lower love might die in me." [1] The experience reflected in that passage—and in the similar passages of the *Epistle* where he speaks of fruition—would appear to be to William the most real experience of the spiritual life, and the guerdon which made all else worth while. It was contemplation and this sweetness of contemplation which he had always sought and which had determined the course of his life. So, when he comes to exhort others—as now the Carthusians—he exhorts them above all else to this contemplative prayer and promises them this fruition. This prayer of most intimate intercourse with God is that spiritual communion which the Carthusian can have always, at any hour of day or night, in his solitary cell. This prayer is that true sacrifice which may be celebrated constantly. As he thinks of the operation of this secret mystery of grace in the cells of the charterhouse, his heart is filled with joy and he is impelled to cry out: How beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! For himself he asks nothing better than that he should thus be "hidden in the secret of Thy face from the confusion of men"; but he is content to have that grace as God wills, and for the rest to serve Him with completest patience.

[1] *De contemplando Deo*, § 20. P.L. CLXXXIV., col. 374. This is only one of many references to the mystical experience in his writings. In *Enigma* (400 B) it is a blinding flash, bursting momentarily through the darkness that enshrouds our life. See also *Cant.* 491, 505, 507, 540.

ANALYTICAL CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

1. Brethren of Mont Dieu, my soul rejoices at the perfect life you have begun. 2. Complete my joy and the joy of all who love God by your fidelity. 3. Your enterprise, in spite of what your critics say, is no novelty; for it goes back to St. John Baptist and the Disciples, and 4. to the ancient monks.

CHAPTER II

5. Recognise that your vocation is a special one and that you have to serve God more perfectly than others. 6. But be not proud or supercilious or censorious.

CHAPTER III

7. Go on your way in humility, remembering the example which you should give to others and leave to posterity. 8. Your business is to seek the face of God, in innocence of act and purity of heart, for that is true piety.

CHAPTER IV

9. True piety is a constant memory of God and a constant effort to know Him and love Him; and that is what you have undertaken. 10. Your cells should be as heaven, for God should be with you in your solitude, and you with Him. 11. How holy the cell where the great sacrament of divine communion is constantly enacted! The cell casts out the unworthy. Push on to perfection; there is no standing still.

CHAPTER V

12. There are three sorts of dwellers: beginners, proficients, perfect; corresponding to three states of life: the animal, the rational, the spiritual. 13. A man is in the animal state when he lives mainly by the senses of the body and has his chief delight in them. He may either turn away from God in folly, or turn to Him in holy simplicity. 14. Of the qualities of simplicity, of which the chief should be obedience. In the beginner obedience should be absolute.

CHAPTER VI

15. Of the gift of reason and its manifold benefits, which are shared alike by the wise of this world and by the simple children of God: the former abusing them, the latter using them so far as they serve their main purpose. 16. By the manner of our conduct will our thoughts and imaginations be determined. If base desire has not been conquered and its place taken by higher desire, there will be many temptations to disturb the solitary. 17. So it is best for the beginner, who cannot yet rule himself by reason, to let himself be fashioned on the wheel of obedience.

CHAPTER VII

18. The novice's first lesson should be to mortify his body and hold it in subjection, but prudently. 19. The rule gives the just measure, and he has only to accept it with confidence. 20. He must be taught to tame the flesh, as a penance for sin and as a defence against temptations, to which beginners are especially subject.

CHAPTER VIII

21. Idleness is the enemy of the soul and the solitary must be busy always in his main business: seeking God. 22. His daily occupations must include prayer,

reading, examination of conscience, manual labour. 23. The earnest soul persevering in his exercises obtains the mastery, and as his nature regains its original rectitude comes to take delight in virtue. 24. But above all he must never be idle, and overcoming ill habit with good, and ill affection with good affection, must strive to obtain this delight in God's service.

CHAPTER IX

25. The cell is your workshop and in the cell you must abide. There is no future for the wanderer. 26. The cell is your hospital, where your sick soul will be cured, if only you give the medicine a fair trial. 27. I give you three warders for your cell: God, conscience, your confessor; and add a fourth: the example of a perfect monk, whom you may have often before your mind's eye.

CHAPTER X

28. You have two cells, the material one and the cell of conscience. You must cherish both and give each its due. 29. You must examine conscience night and morning and take careful thought for your life. Be very faithful to your regular duties, in particular to the good performance of the divine office. 30. At least once a day meditate on the Passion and Redemption of Christ. That commemoration is a Mass which you may celebrate in your cell constantly and at any hour. 31. And there must be definite and serious reading at definite hours, seeking God and not vanity.

CHAPTER XI

32. Bodily exercises, such as vigils, fasts and manual labour, are to be practised at their appointed times and in due measure. 33. In eating and drinking let there be frugality and moderation. 34. So also with sleep,

be moderate and temperate. Thus will you have the body wholly under control.

CHAPTER XII

35. The animal, or sensual, man is to be admitted to your life if he has a true vocation and is truly docile. For he must be one who can improve, and not one who will draw you down to his level. 36. As, for instance, by causing you to build sumptuous cells, such as you have been building, alas! 37. For we should build ourselves only temporary shelters. Splendid houses do harm to the spirit. Leave those to the sick and build no more.

CHAPTER XIII

38. The ancient solitaries built only simple huts, and they supported themselves by the labour of their hands. 39. We have good sanction for living upon the alms of others, but we must not be idle for all that. 40. Don't let us deceive ourselves by idling when we might very well work. 41. And if we cannot eat our bread in the sweat of our brow, let us at least eat it in sorrow of heart, in piety and devotion of conscience.

CHAPTER XIV

42. The beginner is next to be taught to draw nigh to God. Let him meditate on the human life of Our Lord and read the simpler passages of the Fathers and the lives of saints and martyrs. 43. He must be taught in his prayers to rise gradually above bodily imaginations and to pray with the greatest purity of heart. Having begun with the scenes of Our Lord's human life let him go on to meditate on His Divinity. 44. Four kinds of prayer: petition, supplication, communion, thanksgiving. 45. Petition and supplication are preparatory to communion. 46. How that perfect prayer (communion) comes sometimes unasked

and even to the beginner. 47. How sacred and delightful the cell where this communion is enacted. 48. With each member doing his best in his own state the charterhouse is a holy and sacred society.

CHAPTER XV

49. The rational state, wherein reason is the dominant principle. 50. The soul is the principle of life and is capable of reason. When it gets reason it is called mind or spirit. 51. Man's noblest exercise is the exercise of reason, which can have no nobler object than God, who made the rational spirit and who is its end. It has therefore to strive by memory, understanding and love to grow like to God and to live in Him. 52. To this end the mind must be exercised in study; not in vain disputation, but in spiritual study, peaceful and humble, which will operate purification and sanctification in the fear and love of God. 53. Virtue is natural and when good habits are well formed they are stable. Vice, too, may become habit. 54. The work of grace in the formation of virtues. Importance of a good will and of guarding it well. We may give the will full rein in the love of God, but not in other love. 55. But if our love of God may know no bounds, our activity is necessarily limited. A right mind and a good will are our two great forces. 56. Various manifestations of will, towards and away from God. 57. The will has sometimes to be stimulated, sometimes to be checked. Another person is often the best judge of our impulses, hence the value of obedience. The guard of the will is vital, especially for the control of thought. 58. Thought depends on memory, understanding and will. The understanding left to itself turns to trifles away from God; illuminated by grace it leads to union with God. 59. Rambling, undisciplined thinking to be avoided, and the mind concentrated steadily on a serious subject.

CHAPTER XVI

60. So we pass to the spiritual state, of which love is the principle and the Holy Spirit the Master-worker. Here are contemplation, wisdom and fruition. All depends upon the gift of God, but we can prepare mind and heart for Him. 61. We must examine conscience diligently and test our wills to see what they are really seeking. We have to love God above all things and to become like to Him. 62. For likeness to God is our perfection. Nor is it only the likeness we have by nature; for we must have a further likeness, in virtue and in conformity of will. 63. The Holy Spirit is the great artist of the spiritual life, and He alone gives its full fruition. 64. Sometimes God reveals Himself to a soul, in a passing glimpse, and the soul is thereby inspired to work for greater purity. 65. In this way a man may grow in wisdom and love, and in intimate union with God. 66. The saintly soul in its likeness to God has a certain stability in virtue. Its occupation is the contemplation of the attributes of God and it grows ever more and more like to Him. 67. Two kinds of knowledge, the one by the senses from without, the other by the reason from within. It is to reason that wisdom comes. 68. Reason conformed to wisdom is the guiding force of our soul's life, striving always to union with God. 69. Thus does the solitary cease to be solitary, and learn in that union to know God more perfectly. But let him be on his guard against false conceptions and trust chiefly to grace-illumined love. 70. How we should think of God. 71. Most of all we need purity of heart and humble love. If we once get to know Him we shall live for Him and draw others to Him. Purity, humility, fidelity, modesty: these things we must have; and we must guard the secret of the King.

THE EPISTLE
TO THE
BRETHREN OF MONT DIEU

THE PREFACE

BROTHER WILLIAM to his masters and brethren, Haymo the Prior and H: a sabbath of delight.[1]

1. Wellnigh shamelessly, brethren most beloved in Christ, and more than were seemly, do I open my mouth to you; God knoweth I cannot be silent. Pardon me, because my heart is enlarged. Be you also enlarged, I pray you, in your bowels of compassion, and receive me; since I am all yours in Him in whose bowels we yearn, each for the other.[2]

Therefore it is that from the time I went from you until now I have made resolve to dedicate my poor daily labour, not indeed to you, who need it not, but to Brother Stephen and his fellows, the younger brethren, and to the novices who come to you, whose teacher is God alone; that they may have and read therein whatsoever they find profitable to the comforting of their solitude and a spur to their holy intent. I offer that which I may, a good will, and of you I beg the same, and the fruits of it. David by dancing pleased God, not for the dancing's sake, but for his devotion. In like

[1] The MSS. give only the initials of the names and the second H has not been identified. In wishing his friends a sabbath of delight (*sabbatum delicatum*, Is. LVIII., 13) the author intends the profound quiet and joy of contemplation.

[2] This paragraph is a mosaic of Scripture, in the style of St. Bernard, and the author's language generally has a scriptural cast. It seems better not to load the pages with references, but to give only what is of necessity.

manner the woman that anointed the feet of the Lord was praised of the Lord, not because she anointed but because she loved; and because what she could, she did, thereby was she justified.

2. Further, I considered that I ought to dedicate to you another book also [1] which the necessity of certain brethren—though it had more of scruple than of peril in it—compelled me to write for their consolation and for the strengthening of their faith; whose sadness is wont to give me exceeding joy, save that I cannot endure to see them sorrowful. For because of the greatness not of their faith only but also of their love, they so detest whatsoever seemeth to be against faith that if ever so little, whether through the spirit of blasphemy or but the feeling of the flesh, they are tempted or tried concerning this, they think the goodness of their conscience within them (as it were by the hearing only, or the touch) to be altogether harmed, and miserably bewail themselves as though they were reprobates concerning faith. To whom indeed it happeneth, when they come forth from the darkness of the world into the exercises of a purer life, as is wont to happen to men that suddenly from long darkness come forth to the light: that as with those the light itself, whereby other things are seen, when it first cometh upon them hurteth the infirmity of their sight, so these also at the light of faith newly appearing are half blinded and cannot bear the

[1] The short preface (omitting *aliud quoddam opusculum*) would here read: "Moreover I thought that I ought to dedicate to you that which the necessity . . ." and the paragraph must then (presumably) be made to refer to the *Epistle*. But the *Epistle* has nothing to say about the difficulties of faith. See the Introduction, p. xxxiv.

strange beams of this unknown light, till custom school them to very love of the light.[1]

3. Now this same work is divided into two books, of which the one, because it is plain and easy, I thought meet should be called *The Mirror of Faith* [2]; the other, because it seemeth to contain in brief the grounds and form of faith, according to the words and mind of Catholic Fathers, and because it is somewhat harder, I have named *The Riddle of Faith*. In this manner of employment I have rather striven to flee from sloth, the enemy of the soul [3]—since both age and sickness release me from our common labour, not indeed as one that hath accomplished his time of service, but as one slow and unprofitable—than to busy myself with the instruction of others; a thing indeed not comely in the mouth of a sinner and seemly only in those who establish by their lives that which they implant by teaching. In the first book, the unlearned hearer is taught whither he must go; in the second, with what wariness also he must walk. For in this same order saith Our Lord to His disciples: *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*[4] Wherefore the Prophet also saith: *The riches of*

[1] Here ends the preface in the short form.

[2] The author here begins the detailed catalogue of his writings, of which he specifies thirteen: *Speculum fidei; Aenigma fidei; De contemplando Deo; De natura et dignitate amoris; De sacramento altaris; Meditationes; Super Cantica Canticorum; Contra Petrum Ablœardum; In epistolam ad Romanos; Super Cantica ex libris S. Ambrosii; Super Cantica ex libris S. Gregorii; De natura corporis et animæ; Sententiæ de fide.* The last work has not yet been printed; the others are in Migne *P.L.* CLXXX. and CLXXXIV. To complete the list of his writings we should add the present *Epistle*, and the *Vita Bernardi* (*P.L.* CLXXXV.). There are also four letters.

[3] *Otiositas inimica est animæ.* St. Benedict's Rule, chap. 48.

[4] John XIV., 4.

salvation, wisdom and knowledge.[1] And in the Psalm likewise it is first written: *Day unto day uttereth speech*, and afterwards: *Night unto night showeth knowledge*.[2]

4. There are also other works of mine: Two treatises, the first, *Of the Contemplating of God*, the second, *Of the Nature and Dignity of Love;* a book *Of the Sacrament of the Altar; Meditations* not altogether unprofitable for training young souls to prayer; and *Upon the Canticle of Canticles*, as far as the words, *When I had a little passed by them, I found him whom my soul loveth* (III., 4).

5. As for the work *Against Peter Abelard*, who suffered me not to finish the work aforesaid, for I thought that I was no longer able to give myself to a task of such pleasant leisure within, while he without was so cruelly wasting the regions of the faith with the naked sword—what then I wrote against him, since I drew from the sources of the holy Fathers that which I said, as *Upon the Epistle to the Romans*, and in the rest whereof I shall speak hereafter (for in these I said nothing or but little of my own), it is better, if it seem good to you, that my name be kept secret and the works left among books without name, than that the partridge should seem to gather together those she hath not hatched.[3] For I took from the books of St. Ambrose all that he wrote in them concerning the Canticle of Canticles, a great and noble work; and so likewise from Blessed Gregory, but more largely than Bede had done. For Bede, as you know, made of this same borrowing the last book

[1] Isaias XXXIII., 6.
[2] Psalm XVIII., 2.
[3] "As the partridge that gathereth young which she hath not hatched, so is he that getteth riches and not by right." Jeremias XVII., 11.

in his Canticle of Canticles. For my *Sentences on Faith*, which I drew chiefly from the books of Blessed Augustine, if you would copy them—they are strong indeed and weighty—they suit best with the work aforesaid which I have thought good to call *The Riddle of Faith.*

6. There is yet another work of mine, *Of the Nature of the Soul*, written as under the name of John to Theophilus; and that I might say a little concerning the whole of man—for that seemed meet—I added before it somewhat *On the Nature of the Body;* this I took from the books of the physicians of the body, the former from those who keep watch upon the health of the soul.

7. Read therefore all of these; and if ye be not the first, yet (if it so please you) be the last; lest if they come into the hands of those who do nought themselves but carp at all the works of others, I also, being an old man and a weak (as is read of Isaac), weak, I say, not in my going but in my understanding, may be unable to escape from such men unhurt. In short, if my books be found unprofitable, I think it better that at the counsel (rather than the judgement) of my friends the fire of justice shall consume them than that the envy of detractors rushing upon them should find them a stumbling-block. For God hath called us in peace, and we ought to provide good things not in His sight only but in the sight of men, that if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, we may have peace with all men.[1] For the same Apostle doth most straitly admonish us to judge that we put not in our brother's way a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall.[2] Albeit if any man

[1] 1 Corinthians VII., 15; Romans XII., 17–18.
[2] Romans XIV., 13.

read these things with a brotherly mind, though he receive no consolation or edification from them, yet he is not like to find in them a cause of falling or of anger, as against one presumptuous. And, to say nought of edification, he that is a friend will bear in this also with my foolishness, if foolishness there be, and look not askance at my simplicity; and that especially for the reason whereof I spoke before, that being now far removed from external works and broken with age and sickness both, I could not but for the help of this study have escaped the dominion of idleness, which as Scripture witnesseth hath been the teacher of many evils.[1]

[1] "For idleness hath taught much evil." Ecclus. XXXIII., 29.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

A CONGRATULATION ON THE RENEWING OF THE FERVOUR OF ANCIENT RELIGION

1. To the brethren of the Mount of God,[1] by whom the eastern light and ancient Egyptian fervour of religion [2] are brought into this western darkness and cold of France, namely the pattern of solitary life and form of heavenly conversation—to them go forth, O my soul, yea and join with them in the joy of the Holy Spirit, in merriment of the heart, in fervour of piety, and in all service of devout will. Yea, for we ought to feast in the Lord and to be joyful because that most glorious part of Christian devotion and religion, which seemed to touch heaven most nearly, was dead and is alive again, was lost from the world and is found.[3] With the hearing of the ear we had heard, and we believed not; we read in books, and marvelled at the glory that was of old in the solitary life, and the great grace of God therein; but suddenly we found it in the fields of the wood, in the mountain of God, in a fat mountain; where now the pleasant

[1] That is of Mont Dieu; but the author's treatment of the proper name makes a translation of it necessary.

[2] He refers to the Fathers of the Desert, some of whom are mentioned in § 4. Again, when describing his first impressions of Clairvaux, he says that he was reminded of "our fathers the ancient Egyptian monks." *Vita Bernardi*, § 34.

[3] Luke xv. 24.

places of the desert are fat with it, and the hills are girded with exultation. For there, even through you, it appeareth manifestly unto all men, and showeth itself in you; and being unknown till now, findeth fame in few men and simple, since He planteth it in you who by few and simple did once subdue the whole world unto Himself, the world itself being astonished. For although those were great and altogether divine miracles which the Lord did on earth, yet this one thing shone forth above all, this gave light unto all the rest, that by few and simple, as hath been said, He subdued the whole world, and all the height of the wisdom of it, unto Himself; which deed He now beginneth to work in you also. *Even so, Father*, even so; *because so it seemeth good before Thee. For Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent* of this world, *and hast revealed them unto babes.*[1] Therefore *fear not, little flock*, saith the Lord, but be altogether believing, *because it hath pleased God the Father to give a kingdom unto you.*[2]

2. Look, my brethren, look upon your vocation. Where is there one wise among you? where a scribe? where a disputer of this world?[3] For though there be some wise among you, yet through the simple hath He added to Him the wise, who once by men that were fishers subdued unto Himself the kings and philosophers of the world. Leave therefore, leave the wise of this world, that swell with the spirit of this world, whose conceit is of high things and whose

[1] Matt. xi. 26.
[2] Luke xii. 32.
[3] 1 Cor. i. 26, 20.

tongues lick the dust, wisely to go down into hell. But as for you, while the pit is being digged for the sinner, as ye have begun so continue, being made fools for God's sake, in the foolishness of God which is wiser than all men, and by Christ's guiding learn the meek discipline of ascending into heaven. For already your simplicity stirreth many to emulation; already your most high and sufficient poverty confoundeth the covetousness of many; your solitude bringeth unto many a detesting of those things which make a tumult (or seem to make). Therefore whatsoever consolation in Christ is yours, whatsoever solace of charity, whatsoever fellowship of the spirit, whatsoever bowels of mercy, fill up the joy not of me only but of all lovers of the name of the Lord, that with broidering of garments gilded with the gold of the wisdom of God (the Queen that sitteth at the right hand of her spouse) [1] your zeal and your importunity unto good may prepare this raiment of holy newness; to the glory of God, to your great crown, to the joy of all good men.

3. Now I say newness because of the wicked tongues of ungodly men (from whose contradiction God hide you in the secret places of His countenance [2]); who, when they cannot obscure the manifest light of truth, cavil at this mere word of newness, being old themselves, and in their old mind unable to meditate new

[1] Ps. XLIV. 10. *Astitit regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate.*

[2] Ps. XXX. 21. In his *De natura et dignitate amoris* (§ 45) this means the highest degree of union with God. It is a favourite text with William; see the prayers of *De contemplando Deo*, § 21, and *Med.*, 218 A.

things; old bottles that receive not new wine, for if it were poured into them it would make them to burst. But this newness is no new-fangled vanity. For the thing itself is of the ancient religion and piety perfectly founded in Christ; it is the ancient heritage of the Church of God, foreshown from the time of the Prophets, and thereafter when the sun of new grace had arisen, begun and born in John the Baptist; used most often and familiarly by the Lord Himself, and in His presence desired by His disciples. For when the glory of His transfiguration had been beheld by those that were with Him upon the holy mount, straightway Peter (in this indeed absent from himself and knowing not what he said, that having seen the majesty of God he appeared to shut the common good within his own private good; but in this most present to himself and most knowing what he said, that when he had tasted the sweetness thereof he judged it best for himself to be ever therein), Peter, I say, desired this life of companying with God and the heavenly citizens, saying: *Lord, it is good for us to be here. If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; for Thee one, for Moses one, and for Elias one.*[1] Wherein if he had been heard, he would doubtless have made three others afterwards, for himself one, for James one, and for John one.

4. And after the passion of the Lord, when the memory of His bloodshedding was yet close, and burned in the hearts of His faithful, men began to choose this solitary life, to follow the poverty of the spirit, and to be emulous one with another of leisure fruitful in spiritual exercises and in contemplation of

[1] Matt. xvii. 4.

God, so that the deserts were filled. Among whom we read of Paul, Macarius, Antony, Arsenius, and many other such, as it were consular men in the republic of this holy conversation, famous names in the city of God, having noble and triumphal titles for their victory over this world and the prince of this world, and over their bodies, for their zeal to their souls and to the Lord their God. Let them therefore be silent who in darkness judging of the light accuse you of newness out of the abundance of their ill-will; since they are rather to be accused themselves of oldness and of vanity. But ye shall ever have both praisers and detractors, as did also your Lord. Pass by your praisers; and that good which they love in you, do ye love in them. Heed not your detractors, and pray for them. And forgetting the things that are behind, passing over the offences that are set nigh to your road to the right and to the left, press forward to those things that are before you.[1] For if ye desire one by one either to answer your praisers or to contend with your detractors, ye waste that time whose losing in your holy profession is no light thing. For the man that hindereth another hastening from earth to heaven, though he keep him not back, yet he doeth him great hurt.

[1] Phil. III. 13.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

HOW ARDUOUS AND SUBLIME THEIR PROFESSION IS

5. Be not heedless, therefore, nor loiter, since long is the road that remaineth for you. For your profession is very high; it passeth the heavens, it is equal to the angels, it is like to angelic purity. For ye have vowed not all sanctity only, but the perfection of all sanctity and end of all consummation. Not to you belongeth it to be slack concerning common precepts, nor to observe that only which God commandeth, but that which He willeth, proving how good is the will of God, and well pleasing, and perfect.[1] To others it belongeth to serve God, to you to cleave to Him; to others to believe in God, to know, love and fear him; to you to savour of Him, to understand Him, to apprehend Him, to enjoy Him. This is a great thing, this is an arduous thing. But almighty and bountiful is God, who in you doth kindly promise, faithfully render, and unfailingly succour; who to them that for great love of Him make high profession, and in faith and hope of His grace essay things above themselves, giveth both will and desire thereto; and He who gave first the grace of will hath afterwards given strength also to success. And for Him when a man hath faithfully done what he could, though the

[1] Rom. xii. 2.

slanderer slander still, He Himself of His compassion will give judgment to His poor servant and defend his cause, because what he could, he did.[1]

6. Nevertheless, brethren, let all highness be far from the judgment of your conscience, from your littleness and humility, and from your lips; because to be high-minded is death; and easy it is for him that in high places doth contemplate himself to become dazzled and so to suffer jeopardy of his life. Set another name to your profession, write another title upon your order. Let it be rather beasts untamed and creatures uncaged (such as could not otherwise in the accustomed manner of men be subdued) that ye account and call yourselves; looking far above you to their virtue, and marvelling at their glory, who with both hands are mighty men (even as Ahod that most mighty judge in Israel who used either hand for a right hand [2]); who so long as they may, love to be devoutly employed within in charity of contemplating the truth, but when necessity calleth or duty draweth them, do most readily lend, but not give, themselves without, for the truth of fulfilling charity. Take heed also, O servant of God, take heed lest those that thou wouldst not imitate, thou seem to condemn. I would have thee do that in thy infirmity which was done in all wholeness by him who said: *Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief*.[3] For Paul said this, not as lying hastily but as judging devoutly. For he who by perfect examining understandeth

[1] Mark xiv. 8. The text is commented in *Med.* 221 D.
[2] Judges III. 15.
[3] 1 Tim. I. 15.

himself, thinketh no sin to be like his sin because he knoweth no sin as he knoweth his own. I would not therefore have thee think that the common sun and daybringer shineth nowhere but in thy cell, that it is nowhere light save with thee, that the grace of God worketh nowhere but in thy conscience. Is God the God of solitaries alone? Nay, but of all. For the Lord hath pity on all, and hateth nothing that He hath made.[1] I would rather thou thoughtest it were everywhere light save with thee, and that thou shouldst judge worse of thyself than of any man.

[1] Wisdom xi. 25.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THAT VIRTUE IS FERVENTLY TO BE PURSUED FOR AN EXAMPLE TO THEM THAT COME AFTER

7. Rather with fear and trembling work out your own salvation.[1] Consider not what other men are, but, so far as in you lieth, what through you they may become; not those only that live now but also those who hereafter shall be born and whom ye shall have for followers in your holy intent. For on you, on your example, on your authority hangeth of necessity in this region all the posterity of this your holy Order. Ye shall be called fathers, ye shall be called founders and teachers in it by your successors, and as they needs must, they shall both reverence and imitate you. Whatsoever hath been determined by you, whatsoever by your cleaving to it and keeping it hath become custom, to that of necessity your posterity must cleave and keep it, nor may they revoke it, nor may anything be changed then. For it shall be with them concerning you as it is with us concerning the unchangeable laws of sovereign and eternal truth, which it is meet for every man to consider and to know, but which no man may question. And thanks be to God that it shall neither be unworthy for you nor unprofitable to your posterity if ye quit yourselves as good and as worthy men and if they

[1] Phil. II. 12.

follow faithfully that which now ye do. And if ye shall have need of any other manner of wisdom, this likewise God shall reveal to you. For—saving always in all things the sanctity of the Charterhouse and the most praiseworthy reverence thereof—many things are necessary in those chill and endless colds of the Alps which for them at least who in this region follow a humble sufficiency and voluntary poverty, appear less necessary.[1]

8. Ye understand that which I say, for the Lord will give you understanding. For I rejoice in you, and though absent in body am present in spirit; and seeing your discipline, and the fervour of spirit, the abundance of peace, the grace of simplicity, the firmness in intent, the very sweetness of the Holy Spirit in mutual love, the shape of piety altogether fulfilled in your conversation—remembering the Mount of God I rejoice with all my heart and devoutly reverence the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit and the pledge of grace in the hope of religion growing great therein. For this very name of the Mount of God beareth with it an omen of good hope; because as the Psalmist saith of the mount of God, there shall dwell in it *the generation of them that seek the Lord, that seek the face of the God of Jacob; the pure of hands and the clean of heart, who hath not received his soul in vain.*[2] For this is indeed your profession, to seek the God of Jacob; not after the common manner

[1] The Charterhouse here referred to is the Grande Chartreuse itself, situated in a high valley of the Alps of Dauphiné, north of Grenoble. The writer is evidently not at the Grande Chartreuse (as Dom Guigo was), but in the same region as Mont Dieu, *i.e.*, at Signy, some thirty miles away.

[2] Ps. xxiii. 6, 4.

of men, but to seek the face of God, which Jacob saw and said: *I have seen the Lord face to face, and my soul hath been saved.*[1] For to seek the face of God, that is the knowledge of Him, face to face, which face Jacob saw, and whereof the Apostle hath said: *Then shall I know right as also I am known; and now we see in a glass and in riddle, but then face to face;*[2] *we shall see Him as He is.*[3]—to seek this ever in this life through innocence of hands and cleanness of heart is taught by very piety, which is, as Job saith, *the worship of God.*[4] He that hath not that, hath received his soul in vain; that is, he liveth vainly, or rather he liveth not at all, seeing he liveth not that life, to live wherein he received his soul.[5]

[1] Genesis xxxii. 30.
[2] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
[3] 1 John iii. 2.
[4] Job xxviii. 28, according to the Septuagint.
[5] For William (as for St. Augustine) piety may be defined as "seeking the face of God." He is devoted to the texts of the Scripture which he cites here, and especially to the numerous passages in the psalms which speak of the face of God. He makes his own the words of Ps. xxvi. 9: *Exquisivit te facies mea; faciem tuam Domine requiram;* or, as St. Augustine read it: *Quæsivi vultum tuum, vultum tuum Domine requiram.* See his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 638 C; *Enigma*, 408 B; *Med.* 211 A, 212 D, and the whole of *Med.* vii. Two texts from the Psalms sum up his spiritual doctrine: (1) *Quærite faciem ejus semper*; (2) *Accedite ad eum et illuminamini.*

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER

WHAT TRUE PIETY IS; AND WHAT SOLITUDE OR WHAT ENCLOSURE IN HIS CELL BECOMETH A RELIGIOUS

9. For this piety is the perpetual mindfulness of God, the continual striving of the will to the understanding of Him, the unwearied affection to the loving of Him; so that—I say not, no day—but no hour may ever find the servant of God save in the labour of exercise and zeal of advancing, or else in the sweetness of feeling and bliss of enjoying. This is that piety whereof the Apostle admonished the disciple beloved of him and said: *Exercise thyself unto piety. For the exercising of the body is profitable to little, but piety is profitable unto all good works, having the promise of this present life and the life to come.*[1] For not only the outward shape of piety, but its truth in all things and above all things, is promised by your habit and sought by your profession. For as the same Apostle saith, *There are some that have the outward shape of piety, but deny the power thereof.*[2] Whosoever of you hath not this in his conscience, showeth it not in his life, practiseth it not in his cell, he should be called not solitary but desolate[3]; nor is his cell a cell to him, but a prison and a dungeon. For he is desolate and

[1] I Tim. IV. 7, 8.
[2] II Tim. III. 5.
[3] *Non solitarius sed solus.*

alone indeed, with whom God is not; he is imprisoned indeed, who is not free in God. For solitude, and prison, are names of wretchedness; whereas a cell must in no wise be the enclosure of necessity, but the dwelling-place of peace, a door that is closed; not a hiding place, but a secret place.

10. For he with whom God is, is at no time less alone than when he is alone.[1] For then he freely enjoyeth his bliss, then he is his own, to enjoy God in himself, and himself in God. Then in the light of truth, in the peace of a clean heart the pure conscience liveth freely open unto itself, and the memory that is touched by God freely poureth itself into itself; and either the understanding is enlightened, and the will enjoys its proper good; or the defect of human frailty freely bewaileth itself. And therefore according to the form of your purpose, dwelling in heaven rather than in cells,[2] shutting out from you all the world, ye have shut yourselves altogether with God within. For the dwelling in heaven and in the cell are akin; for as this word *celum* and this other word *cella* seem to have some kinship of name, so it is with kinship of piety. For *celum*, which is heaven, and *cella*, which is cell, seem both to have their name from *celare*, which word signifieth to hide. And

[1] *Nunquam minus solus est quam cum solus est.* A saying of Scipio Africanus, recorded by Cato, according to Cicero, *De Officiis* III. 1, and *De Republica* I. 17. Compare the teaching with *Med.* 217 C: *Non enim ero solus, quamdiu tu mecum eris, Deus meus; sed si me deserueris, vae soli.*

[2] *In celis potiusquam in cellis.* The mediæval spelling (*celum* for *cælum*) and similar pronunciation made the relationship of the two words seem plausible. William derives both from the root of *celo*, "I hide"—the latter correctly, the former not.

truly that which is hidden in heaven is hidden in your cells; that which is done in heaven is done in your cells. What is this? To give thyself to God, to enjoy God.[1] Which being done after your rule piously and faithfully in your cells, I will dare say that the holy angels of God take *cellæ* for *celi* then and have like delight in your cells as in heaven. For when in the cell heavenly things are continually done, heaven is made very nigh to the cell by likeness of mystery, by affection of piety, and by accomplishing of a like work; and when the spirit prayeth, or it may be forsaketh the body, it is then no long or hard way from *cella* to *celum*, from cell to heaven. For from the cell is oftentimes ascending to heaven; and scarce ever is there descending from the cell into hell, save as the Psalmist saith: *Let them go down living into hell*[2]: forsooth, that dying, they may not go down.[3] For in this manner do men that make cells their habitation often go down into hell; seeing that as by continual contemplation they are fain to behold the joys of heaven, that they may seek them the more fervently, so likewise they are fain to behold the pains of hell, that they may tremble and flee from them. And this is that which they pray for their enemies, namely that they may go down living into hell. But dying, never or scarce ever goeth any

[1] *Vacare Deo, frui Deo.* The second of these two verbs is very frequently used by William to express the characteristic activity of the contemplative soul. See, for instance, *Enigma* 415 A and *Cant. passim.*

[2] Ps. LIV. 16.

[3] In *Med.* VI., 226 D, he says that in times of desolation he sometimes "goes down to hell alive, that he may not go down there when dead."

man from his cell down to hell, because scarce anyone, unless he be predestined to heaven, continueth there unto death.

11. But the son of grace and fruit of the womb of grace is by his cell cherished, nurtured, embraced, led to the fulness of perfection and made worthy of God; but the stranger and bastard is soon disavowed of it, and cast out. Wherefore the Lord saith to Moses: *Put off the shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*[1] For the dead body of dead affections or the man of dead heart, these the holy place and holy ground suffer not long. The cell is holy ground and a holy place, wherein the Lord and His servant speak often together, as a man speaketh to his friend. In it often the faithful soul is joined to the Word of God, the bride meeteth the bridegroom, heavenly things mix with earthly, the things of God with the things of man. For as the church is the holy place of God, so the cell is the holy place of the servant of God. For both in the church and in the cell divine things are handled, yet more often in the cell. In the church, at sundry times and after a visible and figurative manner, the sacraments of the Christian religion are dispensed. But in the cell as in heaven, in very truth and very order (albeit not yet in the very majesty of purity and quiet of everlastingness) the essence of all the sacraments of our faith is continually celebrated.[2] Therefore as hath been said the cell casteth out right soon, as it were an abortion,

[1] Exodus III. 5.

[2] For the life of grace and union with God, to which the sacraments are ordinated, is there continually enacted.

the stranger that is no son, and speweth him out even as unprofitable and poisoned food; nor can the home of piety long suffer such an one in its bowels. And the foot of pride cometh upon him, and the hand of the sinner beareth him away and moveth him[1]; and when he hath been cast out he cannot abide there, but he fleeth wretched, naked and trembling, even as Cain from before the Lord, being set as a victim before vices and demons, that whichsoever of them findeth him first may slay him with the death of the soul. Or if he abide therein awhile, not in steadfastness of virtue but in perseverance of wretchedness, the cell becometh a prison to him, or as it were a tomb to a man alive. But the wise man shall be wiser when the pestilent man hath been scourged,[2] and the just shall wash his hands in the blood of the sinner.[3] Therefore as the prophet saith, *If thou wilt turn, O Israel, turn unto me*[4]; that is, lay hold on the height of perfect conversion. For it is permitted to no man long to remain in the same state, but always the servant of God must needs advance, or else fall away; either he striveth upwards or he is driven downwards.[5] Now from all of you perfection is required, albeit not all of one kind. But if thou be a beginner, begin perfectly; if thou hast begun to advance, do this also perfectly; if thou hast attained somewhat of perfection, measure thyself within thyself, and say with the Apostle:

[1] Ps. XXXV. 12.
[2] Proverbs XIX. 25.
[3] Ps. LVII. 11.
[4] Jeremias IV. 1.
[5] The *locus classicus* of this argument is St. Bernard's Letter to Abbot Guarinus (Ep. CCLIV.)

Not that I have already attained or am perfect; but I follow after, if perchance I may comprehend Him in whom I am also comprehended. And this one thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forward to those that are before, I press unto the goal, to the prize of the heavenly calling in Christ Jesus. Thereafter he addeth: *As many of us as are perfect, let us be minded thus.*[1] Whereby it manifestly appeareth by the teaching of the Apostle that the perfect forgetting of those things that are behind and perfect stretching forward to those things that are before, are the very perfection of the just man in this life; and the perfection of this perfection shall be there, where shall be the perfect apprehension of the prize of the heavenly calling.

[1] Phil. III. 12–15.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

THE THREEFOLD STATE OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE, THE ANIMAL, THE RATIONAL AND THE SPIRITUAL: THAT IS TO SAY, OF THOSE BEGINNING, OF THOSE ADVANCING, AND OF THE PERFECT.

12. Now in this manner, even as one star differeth from another in brightness,[1] so one cell differeth from another in conversation, that is to say conversation of those beginning, of those advancing, and of those that are perfect. The state of beginners may be called animal; of those advancing, rational; of the perfect, spiritual.[2] Some things may be pardoned in those that are yet animal, which ought not to be pardoned in those that are now held to be in a manner rational; and again some things are pardoned in those that are rational which may not be pardoned in those that are spiritual, in whom all things ought to be perfect, and worthy not of blame but of praise and of imitation. And since every religious state consisteth in these three kinds of men, which are both distinguished

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 41.

[2] For this classification, see especially *Cant.* 477 B and 480 D. Also St. Bernard's Sermons on the Canticle: XX., XXIII., § 16, XL., § 4. The clearest exposition is in that summary of these sermons which has sometimes been attributed to William and bears the secondary title of *De triplici statu* (P.L. CLXXXIV. 407–436). The classification was doubtless one which the two friends talked over together at Clairvaux. It goes back ultimately to St. Paul.

by their own proper names and known apart by the propriety of their own pursuits, the sons of God, in the time that is theirs, ought ever diligently to consider what is lacking to them; whence they have come, how far they have attained, and in what state of advancement each day, nay each hour, their conscience findeth them. For the animal are they who of themselves are neither led by reason nor drawn by affection; and yet being either moved by authority or admonished by teaching or stirred by example, they approve that which is good wheresoever they find it, and like blind men follow, led by the hand; for they imitate others. The rational are they who by the judgment of reason and discerning of natural knowledge have both knowledge of good and desire thereof, but have not yet affection. The perfect are they who are led by the spirit and more fully enlightened by the Holy Ghost. And because that good, by whose affection they are drawn, doth savour well unto them, they are called *sapientes* or wise.[1] And because they are clothed with the Holy Spirit, as was said of Gedeon,[2] because of this clothing of the Holy Spirit they are called spiritual. The first state pertaineth to the body; the second busieth itself with the soul; the third hath no rest save in God. And as each one thereof hath its own manner of advancing, so each in its own kind hath its own measure of perfection. The beginning of good in animal conversation is perfect obedience; the advancing, for a man to subdue his own body and

[1] *Sapere*, to taste or savour of (used both of things and persons); then to have good taste, and so be wise (its most common meaning).

[2] Judges VI. 34.

bring it into subjection ; the perfection, by the practising of good to have turned custom into delight. The beginning of the rational man is to understand those things which in the teaching of the faith are laid before him ; the advancing, to work such things ; the perfection, when judgment of the reason turneth to affection of the soul. The perfection of the rational man is the beginning of the spiritual man ; the advancing, to behold the glory of God with face unveiled ; the perfection, to be transformed into the same image from glory unto glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

13. And first, to speak further of that first kind, that is the animal, animality is that manner of life which obeyeth the bodily senses : namely, when the soul, being affected as it were outside itself by the bodily senses in delight of bodies beloved, feedeth on the joy of them and nourisheth its sensuality ; or when it returneth within itself, and being unable to bear with itself into the place of unbodily nature those bodies whereunto it hath clung by reason of the strong glue of love and of custom, it taketh with itself within the images of the same, and there converseth with them in friendly wise ; and being now accustomed to these it thinketh that there is nothing except such things as it hath left without or else such as it hath brought within ; and thereafter, for as long as it may, holdeth it a sweet thing to live after bodily delights. Moreover when it is cut off from these, it knoweth not how to think save of things bodily in imagination. And when it lifteth itself to considering of divine or spiritual things, it may not judge of them otherwise than as of bodies or things bodily. Such a soul,

being turned away from God, becometh foolishness, seeing it hath been exceeding slothful within itself, and so brutish that it may not, or will not, be ruled. But when through pride it hath forsaken itself to wander much without, it becometh prudence of the flesh, and seemeth to itself to be wisdom though in truth it is but folly, as the Apostle saith : *Saying that they are wise they have become fools*.[1] And yet if it turn unto God, it becometh holy simplicity, that is to say, the same will ever towards the same thing ; as it was in Job, who is called *a simple man and an upright, and one that feared God*.[2] For in very truth simplicity is the perfect turning of the will unto God, asking one thing from the Lord and seeking this,[3] not turning hither and thither to multiplicity in the world. Or again, simplicity is true humility in conversation, seeking a righteous conscience rather than fame, when the simple man feareth not to seem foolish in the world that he may be wise in God. Again, simplicity is the turning of the naked will to God, but not yet shapen by reason to be love, which is shapen will, not yet enlightened to be charity, which is the bliss of love.

14. Simplicity therefore, having in itself some beginning of the creation of God, that is, a simple and good will, as it were the unshapen matter of the good man that shall be, in the beginning of its conversion offereth it to its Maker to be shapen. For having now with a good will the beginning of wisdom, that is the fear of the Lord, it understandeth from

[1] Rom. I. 22.
[2] Job I. 1.
[3] *Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram.* Ps. XXVI. 4.

this that the will may not be shapen of itself, and that nothing is so profitable for the foolish as to obey the wise. Therefore this simple man, submitting himself to man for God's sake, committeth to him that good will to be shapen in God, in a humble sense and spirit; and the fear of God beginneth to work in him all perfection of virtues, when in justice he humbleth himself to his betters, in prudence he trusteth not himself, in temperance he shunneth choosing, in fortitude he submitteth himself wholly to obedience, not to choose therein, but to fulfil it. For this is the wife whom the Lord commandeth: *And thy turning shall be towards thy husband.*[1] His husband is his own reason and soul, or another's. For this husband is obeyed by the man that is simple and upright in himself; but oftentimes more rightly and more safely in another than in himself. Wherefore according to the command of God and order of nature itself the wife oweth to the husband, the animality to the spirit or to some spiritual man, a rightful turning, that is, perfect obedience. Now perfect obedience, and that chiefly in a beginner, is without questioning, that is, not to question what manner of command is laid on it, or wherefore; but to strive only after this, that whatsoever is commanded by one greater than itself be humbly and faithfully done.[2] For the tree of good and evil in paradise is the keen judging in religious conversation that belongeth to a spiritual father, who judgeth all things but himself is not judged of any

[1] Genesis III. 16, according to the Septuagint.

[2] The same unquestioning obedience is recommended to the novice in his *De natura et dignitate amoris*, § 7, and in similar language.

man. It is for him to question and for others to obey. Adam to his pain tasted of the forbidden tree, being taught of him who put this thing into his heart, saying: *Why did the Lord command you not to eat of the tree?* This is the questioning, why the command was given. He saith likewise: *Because he knew that in the day wherein ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods.*[1] This is why the command was given, because the Lord suffereth them not to become gods. Adam questioned, he ate, he became disobedient, he was cast out of paradise. In like manner, a sensual man,[2] that questioneth, a novice that is prudent, a beginner that is wise, may in no wise endure long in his cell and stand fast in the congregation. He must become foolish, that he may be wise; all his questioning must be this, that there be no questioning in him[3]; all his wisdom must be this, that in this part he have none.

[1] Genesis III. 1, 5.

[2] We take leave to write "sensual man" instead of "animal man."

[3] Or, "all his discretion must be that he have no discretion." In the parallel passage already mentioned it is: "All his discretion must be that he be a fool for Christ, and depend on the will of another."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

THAT GOD HATH GIVEN TO MAN AN UNDERSTANDING THAT MAY RECEIVE DIVERS ARTS AND SCIENCES; BUT THAT SOME USE IT ILL AND SOME WELL

15. Now in that point wherein the animality and reason meet, in the nature of man's mind, our good Maker hath left understanding and device, and in devising art; in which things God hath set man above the works of his hands, and hath set all those things of the world beneath his feet; to the proud sensual man, for a witness to the losing of his natural dignity and the likeness of God; but to the simple and humble, for an aid to get him that dignity again, and to keep that likeness. By this that which is known of God is manifest in them.[1] By this the Creator is judged of his creature. By this the justice of God is known, and that they that do rightly are worthy of life, but they that do not so are worthy of death. By this the creature which willingly serveth man is subdued and made apt to nature, that it may serve not only that necessity which cometh of sin, but also man's will and liking. Hence also it is manifest unto all how many and great things, necessary to this life and serviceable to good men and bad alike, and in their own kind most fair, have been and now are made both

[1] Rom. I. 19.

by good men and bad. For hence it is that in books, in works of the hand and in buildings, by the exceedingly manifold inventions of men, so many manners of study have come forth, so many kinds of callings, subtleties, exquisite sciences, arts and eloquences, varieties of offices and dignities, and the inventions of this world without number, which those men also who are called the wise of this world do use together with the simple and sons of God, unto necessity and profit. But those abuse them unto curiosity, lust, and pride; these use them for necessity's sake, having their joy otherwhere. Therefore those slaves of their senses and of their bodies are followed by the fruits of them, which are fornication, uncleanness, pride, luxury, enmities, contentions, emulations, wrath, brawlings, dissensions, envyings, revellings, drunkenness and such like, which whosoever follow shall not enter the kingdom of God. But these are followed by the fruits of the spirit, which are charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, long-suffering, goodness, meekness, faith, modesty, continence and chastity[1]; and piety, which hath the promise of the life that now is and the life to come.[2]

16. Now so long as worldly and simple men are busied both with doing of deeds, men indeed see like actions, but God discerneth the will and intent of them. But when each of them returneth unto his own place, his conscience feedeth each severally with the fruits of his intent. Nevertheless these two sorts of men return not both in like manner to their conscience; for no man loveth to return to it after a

[1] Gal. v. 19–23.
[2] 1 Tim. iv. 8.

deed when he hath not set out from it with a right intent unto doing. But he that returneth to his conscience, if he have not yet overcome his desires, findeth there, of those same desires, it may be pleasant delights or bitter gnawings ; and thence he multiplieth his thoughts. And although a man shall have overcome his desires, yet so long as the greater desire of the true good, or greater delight therein, doth not yet possess his mind, he suffereth with a kind of hateful liking the imaginations of things done, seen, or heard ; wherefore both in this man and that the loins are filled with illusions of delights, and for the considering of divine or spiritual things even the light of their own eyes doth forsake them.[1] When such a man wrestleth against his desires, he suffereth travail, because he is not yet able to overcome his affections perfectly ; and even he that aspireth now unto liberty cannot yet shake off from himself the imaginings of his affections, and the evil, busy, or idle thoughts which arise everywhere from thence. From hence in the time of prayer and singing of psalms, and of other spiritual exercises, there spring up and move in the heart of God's servant imaginings of thoughts and dreamings, and that though he will it not but strive therewith ; and by these, as it were by unclean birds whether settling upon a place or flying around it, the sacrifice of devotion is either snatched altogether from the hands of him that holdeth it or oftentimes is polluted, even to the weeping of him that offereth it. In this fashion there ariseth a miserable and unequal strife of the

[1] *Et lumen oculorum meorum et ipsum non est mecum.* Ps. xxxvii. 11.

wretched soul; the spirit and reason guard the will and intent of the heart and the ready submission of the body, but importunate animality seizeth on the affection and understanding, so that the mind remaineth oftentimes without fruit. Hence it is that in weaker souls and those wherein the lusts of the flesh and the world are not yet perfectly mortified, the vices of curiosity everywhere burst forth. Hence it is that they seek for their solitude and silence inordinate consolations contrary to their profession; secret resting places of their own liking on the king's highway of common custom; hence cometh a loathing of that which is wont to be done and the presumption of new things. And these indeed seem for the moment to abate, as it were by scratching, the itch and weariness of the sick mind; but in truth they heat and inflame it, and make it to burn the worse thereafter and itch the more. Hence proceed daily new occupations, new inventions of doing and labouring, and divers readings, not to the edification of the soul but to the beguiling the weariness of the day that tarrieth; so that when the solitary hath rejected all old and accustomed things, and new things fail him, nothing remaineth to him but to detest his cell and to flee from thence as soon as may be.

17. Wherefore the good simple man and he that is new in the profession of religion and solitude, having neither reason to guide him, affection to draw him, nor discretion to refrain him, but using violence as it were upon himself as the potter upon the thing he maketh—such a man is to be wrought by a law of God's commandments as by the hands of another, and

to be shapen in all patience, and upon the wheel of swift obedience and in the fire of his probation to be subdued to the will and pleasure of his moulder and shaper. For though he have a quick wit, ready devices, and an excellent understanding, these are the instruments as much of vice as of virtue. Let him shun not therefore to be taught to use unto good that which may be used unto evil; for this is the proper working of virtue. Let his wit shape his body, his devising inform his nature, his understanding make his mind not to be exalted, but to be obedient unto teaching. For wit, device, understanding and the like are received as gifts freely given; but with virtue it is not so. Virtue will be taught with humility, sought with labour, possessed with love. For since it is worthy of all these things, it may not otherwise be taught, sought, or possessed.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

WHAT THINGS THE NOVICE, OR UNSKILFUL HERMIT, SHOULD FIRST BE TAUGHT

18. First therefore this new dweller in the desert must be taught according to the teaching of the Apostle Paul, to present his body *a living and holy sacrifice, pleasing to God, his reasonable service*.[1] Who also desiring to refrain in the new fervour of the animal man (who perceiveth not yet the things of God)[2] an over-hasty and curious enquiry concerning divine and spiritual things, did add these words likewise: *For I say by the grace of God that hath been given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it beseemeth, but to be wise unto sobriety*.[3] For because all teaching of the sensual man in especial regardeth the body and nature of the outward man, he must be taught by reason to mortify his body and members which are on earth, and between the flesh and the spirit, which lust ever the one against the other,[4] to keep a right judgment of reason and discretion, and not to receive in his judging the person of any of them. He must be taught so to keep his body as it were a sick person given into his care, to

[1] Rom. xii. 1.
[2] *Animalis homo non percipit ea quæ sunt spiritus Dei.* 1 Cor. ii. 14.
[3] Rom. xii. 3.
[4] Gal. v. 17.

whom things unprofitable must be denied, though he be full fain of them, and things profitable must be given, though he be full loath. He must so do with his body as if it were not his own, but His by whom we were bought with a great price, that we may glorify Him in our body.[1] Also he must be taught to beware of that wherewith the Lord through His prophet reproacheth the sinful people, saying *Ye have cast Me behind your backs*.[2] And he must beware especially that for the necessities or the goods of this life he suffer not his spirit in any wise to fall away from the righteousness of its intent or the dignity of its nature into the love and honouring of his body. And therefore his body is the more hardly to be handled, that it rebel not nor be proud; yet in such manner that it be able to serve the spirit; for to serve the spirit it was given. It is not so to be kept as though for the sake of it we lived; but as that without which we cannot live. For the bond which we have with the body we may not break when we will, but must patiently wait for its lawful dissolution, and meanwhile keep all things that belong to that lawful bond.

19. Therefore we must so live with it, or so agree with it, as with that wherewith we shall not long tarry; yet so that if it fall out otherwise, we be not eager to depart from it. And in this matter we must needs have toiled much and painfully, and have erred often and perilously, did not the law of obedience and of the cell declare forthwith to him that entereth on this life the perfect shape of the common teaching and custom

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 20.
[2] Ezechiel xxiii. 35.

as concerning food and clothing, working and resting, silence and solitude, and all such things as belong to the tending or the necessity of the outward man, and so make a brother obedient, patient and quiet, neither overbold nor over-careful thereafter. Wherein from the first all superfluities are so cut short and diminished, all necessaries so contained within the terms of meet sufficiency and limits of general continence that there remaineth that which the strong desire and the feeble flee not from [1]; so that neither the number of things permitted may hurt the conscience of any that thankfully useth them, nor those things which are removed in any wise tempt in the Lord's servant the sufficiency of his obedient and rightly ordered body. In which things, as Solomon saith, *He that walketh simply, walketh confidently; but he that is of an hard heart shall fall into evil.*[2] For though necessity be so ordained that there be no more place for complaining and that all superfluity be removed, yet if anything either publicly or privately is to be added or taken away, this lieth in the Prior's discretion without any scruple or peril of those that are subject to him and obey him.

20. The novice therefore that would be a hermit is to be taught according to the rule of the common institution to subdue the lusts of his flesh by continual penitence for his past sins, and in order to the despising of other things, to come to the despising of himself. He is diligently to be fortified against temptations, which rage most fiercely against a novice

[1] *Ut sit et fortes quod cupiant et infirmi non refugiant.* Rule of St. Benedict, Chap. XLVIII. Used also in *Enigma*, 407 D.

[2] Proverbs X. 9; XXVIII. 14.

and a solitary; for the servant of God who serveth God freely ceaseth not to be tried by vices with the reward of offered delights; the devil putteth them into his heart, the flesh lusteth, the world setteth forth things to be lusted after. For the Lord our God trieth us, whether we love Him or no; not as though he knew not and would learn, but that in the trial this may become the more fully known to us. But those temptations are lightly overcome, and reason lightly goeth forth against those things that are either feared, or at the first sight known to be evil; but those which enter a man under the likeness of good are known more hardly and received more perilously. For as measure is most hardly kept in that which is believed to be a good, so not every desire for good is at all times safe.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

HOW EVERY RELIGIOUS, AND ESPECIALLY EVERY SOLITARY, OUGHT TO FLEE FROM IDLENESS[1]; AND WHAT OCCUPATIONS ARE FITTING TO HIM

21. But the stinking source of all evil temptations and unprofitable thoughts is idleness; for slothful leisure is the chief evil of the mind. Let the servant of God be never at leisure though he have as it were an holiday in God's service. For we ought not to give a name so doubtful, so vain, so soft to a thing so certain, so holy, so severe. For the serving of God is no idleness, but more business than any earthly business.[2] That which a man in his cell doeth not faithfully and fervently, whatsoever he doeth, if he do it not for the service of God, he is idle in this thing. Wherein to seek after idle matters to shun idleness is a thing ridiculous. Now that thing is idle which hath neither profit nor intent of profit. A man ought not chiefly to seek after this, that the day be spent with some pleasure, or without great sickness of heart

[1] *Otium*, which must be rendered sometimes "leisure," sometimes "idleness."

[2] This clause is woven into an eloquent passage of *Sancta Sophia* in defence of contemplative prayer, of which we venture to cite part: "Those that are inexperienced may, and often do, call this a state of idleness and unprofitable cessation, as Martha complained against her sister Mary; but those that have attained to a taste of it know it to be the *business of all businesses*" (*ed.* Sweeney, p. 508).

and weariness; but that from the actions of the day accomplished, something unto the profit of the soul may ever remain behind in his conscience, that every day something be laid up in the treasury of his heart. The good monk should consider he hath not lived on that day in which he remembereth to have done none of those things for the sake of which a man dwelleth in a cell.

22. Askest thou what thou shalt do, or wherewith thou shalt occupy thyself? First, beside the daily sacrifice of prayers and occupation of reading, thou must give a part of the day to the daily examination of thy conscience, to thy amending, to the establishing of good custom in thee. Then as is enjoined thee thou must labour somewhat with thy hands, not in a thing that may amuse thy mind by the delight of an hour, but that may keep and foster thy zeal for spiritual studies; wherein the mind may be relieved for an hour but not dissipated; whence it may lightly free itself when it seemeth good to return to itself again, without controversy of a will that hindereth and without pollution of a delight felt or of a memory that imagineth. For the man is not for the woman, but the woman for the man.[1] Spiritual exercises are not for the bodily, but the bodily for the spiritual. Therefore even as when man was created a helpmate was added to him or made for him, like to himself, of the very substance of man; so also bodily exercises, although they are necessary to the helping of spiritual zeal, yet seem not all to be meet alike for this, but rather those that seem to have with the spiritual a

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 9.

nearer kinship and likeness : as to meditate somewhat unto spiritual edification that it may be written, and to write somewhat that it may be read. For exercises and works in the open air, as they distract the senses, so they often outweary the spirit, save when by the harder labour of rural works there cometh greater contrition of the body unto the contrition and humbling of the heart. For often by the oppression of their toil they press out the affection of more vehement devotion. Which also falleth out so in the labour of fastings, vigils and all things wherein is affliction of the body ; as manifestly appeareth.

23. But the sober and prudent man prepareth himself unto all manner of labour and is not distracted by it but the rather draweth into himself ; for by ever considering not that which he doeth but the intent of his doing, he looketh to the end of all consummation[1] ; and the more truly he striveth towards this, the more fervently and faithfully doth he labour with his hands also, setting beneath him the servitude of all his body. For the senses are made one in the discipline of a good will ; they may not grow wanton because of the weight of labour, and being subdued and humbled unto the obedience of the spirit they are taught to be conformed unto it both in the sharing of the labour and in the expecting of consolation. For nature which by sin passed out of its true order and strayed from the rightness of its created state, if it turn again to God, recovereth quickly (according to the measure of the fear and love it hath towards God) whatsoever things it lost by the turning away ; and

[1] *Omnis consummationis vidi finem.* Ps. CXVIII. 96.

when the spirit beginneth to be reformed after the image of its Creator, the flesh likewise flourisheth soon again and willingly beginneth to be conformed to the spirit that is reformed. For even against its senses, the flesh beginneth to take joy in whatsoever giveth joy to the spirit. Moreover because of its manifold failing (through the penalty of sin) it thirsteth in manifold wise after God, and seeketh sometimes even to outrun the spirit its ruler. For we lose not our delights, but change them from body to soul, from the senses to the conscience. Bread that is made of husks, plain water, garden herbs and pulse, are not delectable things; but that in the love of Christ and desire of inward joys a man may thankfully satisfy therewith his belly that obeyeth him, this is a delectable thing. How many thousands of poor men do with these things, or with some one of these, satisfy nature with delight! Truly it would be a very light thing and a pleasant, the spice of the love of God being added, to live after nature, did but our folly suffer us; but when that is amended, straightway nature smileth on them that live after nature. So is it with labour likewise. The husbandman hath stout sinews and strong arms, and this cometh of his employment. Yet suffer him to be idle, and he groweth delicate. For will maketh custom, custom practice, practice giveth strength in all manner of labour.

24. But to our purpose—let this be the end both of our toil and of our leisure, that we be never idle; and be this our business ever that that may be perfectly fulfilled in us which the Apostle saith to sensual men and beginners: *I speak a human thing*, saith he, *because*

of the infirmity of your flesh. For as once ye gave your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity, unto iniquity, so give your members now to serve justice unto sanctification.[1] Let the sensual man hear this who till now hath been the familiar slave of his body, but now beginneth to subdue his body unto the spirit and to form himself to understanding the things that are of God; and let him gird himself up to forsake by faith the slavery of necessity and the custom of his flesh that ruleth him. Let him make to himself necessity against necessity and custom against custom, till he deserve more fully to receive delight against delight, that it may as much delight him to be free (according to the Apostle's counsel) from the delights of the flesh and the world as first it delighted him to have them; that it may delight him as much with the members of his body to serve justice unto sanctification as before it delighted him to serve uncleanness and iniquity, unto iniquity. This is the perfection of the sensual man in his state, of the novice that beginneth; who when he hath fulfilled this sensual or human thing, if he look not back, but faithfully press onward to the things that are before, shall soon attain unto that divine thing, to begin to apprehend as he is apprehended, to know as also he is known. But this work may not be accomplished in one moment of conversion; it is not the work of one day, but of much time, much sweat, much labour, according to the grace of God that pitieth and the zeal of man that willeth and runneth.[2]

[1] Rom. VI. 19.
[2] Rom. IX. 16.

his place and not his mind.[1] In all places he findeth himself the same, save that the very changing maketh him to be the worse; even as a man hurteth a sick person by bearing of him about and shaking of him. For he should know himself to be sick and pay heed to that which causeth his sickness. If his rest be not broken, the continuing of remedies shall soon prevail, and his mind being healed from its estrangements, its captivities and temptations, shall become in God all its own. The nature that hath been not defiled only, but polluted,[2] needeth a remedy, and that no slight one. Let him therefore abide quietly in his hospital (for so physicians do call the place wherein sicknesses are healed) and let him continue the use of the remedies he hath begun until he find health again.

26. Thy hospital, O sick and diseased man, is thy cell; the remedy whereby thou hast begun to be healed is obedience, and true obedience. But know that the often changing of remedies is an harmful thing, confounding nature and distracting the sick person. For even so a man that taketh a journey any whither, if he holdeth to one sure road, shall quickly come thither whither he goeth and make an end of his journey and of his toil. But if he essay many roads, he wandereth and maketh never an end of his toil, because of such wandering there is no end. Thou shouldst therefore not change thy remedy or receive one for another, but even unto thy end of perfect

[1] Slightly altered from Horace, Ep. I, 11, 27.
[2] The wording seems to be that of Seneca, Ep. 59 9; *non enim inquinati sumus, sed infecti.*

wholeness use the remedy of obedience to thy physician. Nor shouldst thou unthankfully cast it aside when thou art whole again, though thereafter thou mayest use it in another fashion. If therefore thou hastenest unto health, see thou presume not at all, or ever so little, to do anything of thyself, but speak first with thy physician; for if thou expectest from him the help of a physician, it must needs be that thou blush not ever to show him thy wound openly. Or if thou wilt, blush, but discover the whole and hide nothing. For there are some men that when they make confession tell their sins as it were a tale, counting the sicknesses of their soul without confusion and wellnigh without penitence, and without the affection of sorrow. For he that hath the feeling of sorrow speedily findeth tears and melteth in groanings. But if to that evil sickness there be added a more desperate senselessness, because that man grieveth not, therefore the nearer to health he seemeth to be, the farther he is from it. But if thy physician be over-clement, as one that would heal all with ointments and gentle plasters, take the thing then upon thyself, and as one desirous of stronger and swifter remedy, ask of him the iron of health, demand of him a cautery. Thy physician is ever nigh thee and ever ready.

27. For that thy solitude be not loathsome to thee, and that thou mayest the more securely abide in thy cell, three guardians are given thee, to wit God, thy conscience, and thy ghostly father. To God thou owest piety, to give thyself all to him; to thy conscience honour, to blush to sin before it; to thy ghostly father, the obedience of charity, to run to him concern-

ing all things. Moreover that thou mayest thank me, I will give thee a fourth also; and for so long as thou art a little child, and until thou learn more fully to think on the presence of God, I will get thee a schoolmaster. Choose to thyself—so I bid thee—a man the example of whose life so entered thy heart, and reverence thereof so stuck to thee, that so often as thou callest him to mind thou mayest rise to the reverence of him thou thinkest on and compose and order thyself. Let him, being thought on as though he were present with thee, amend to the affection of mutual charity in thee everything that ought to be amended; and yet shall thy solitude suffer no loss of its secrecy. Let him be present to thee as often as thou wilt; let him often appear before thee even when thou wouldest not. His holy severity when thou considerest it shall speak his rebukes to thee; his piety and lovingkindness, his consolations; the sincerity of his holy life, his example. For when thou considerest that all thy thoughts are seen of him, thou wilt be forced to the amending them as though he saw and rebuked them. In this manner, as the Apostle biddeth, do thou guard thyself[1]; and that thou mayest ever have sight of thyself, turn thine eyes ever away from all things. The eye would be an excellent member of the body if it might see itself as it seeth other things. But although this is permitted to the inward eye, yet if it follow the example of the outward, neglect itself, and pay heed to things without, it is not able to return unto itself even when it would. Heed thou thyself; thou art matter enough of care to

[1] 1 Tim. v. 22.

thyself. In like manner shut away from thine outward eyes that which thou hast ceased to see, and from thine inward eyes that which thou hast ceased to love; for nothing so easily groweth again as love, and that specially in new and tender souls.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

THE DUTIES AND EXERCISES OF THE CELL

28. DARE also sometimes to be wise, and to be zealous after the better gifts,[1] and be to thyself a parable of edification. Thou hast one cell without, another within. The outward cell is the house wherein thy soul and thy body dwell together; the inward is thy conscience, which ought to be dwelt in by God (who is more inward than all thine inward parts) and by thy spirit.[2] The door of the outward enclosure is a sign

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 31.

[2] The Latin of this striking passage is: *Alia cella tua exterior, alia interior. Exterior est domus, in qua habitat anima tua cum corpore tuo; interior est conscientia tua, quam inhabitare debet omnium interiorum tuorum interior Deus cum spiritu tuo.* Saint Catherine of Siena, two centuries later, teaches very much the same doctrine. See especially her letter to Monna Alessa dei Saracini (*tr.* in *Letters of S. Catherine of Siena*, by Vida D. Scudder, p. 27). It is not true that St. Catherine's interior cell was the "cell of self-knowledge" alone; for she is particularly emphatic that it must be the "cell of self-knowledge *and* of the knowledge of God." And we are told by her biographer that she herself, when excluded from a favourite retreat, was taught by our Lord to make a cell in her heart where she might commune with Him undisturbed. The important thing for her, as for William, is communion with God. The *Epistle* was translated into Tuscan in the fourteenth century under the title: *Pistola di S. Bernardo à Frati de Monte di Dio* (printed Bologna, 1867). But the idea seems to have been current in Italy earlier than that, if we may accept as genuine the words attributed to St. Francis of Assisi and dated 1217: "Brother Body is our cell and the soul sits therein like a hermit and thinks on God and prays to him." That looks like a variation on the same theme. May William count these two Saints among his disciples? We may note, for the question of the authorship,

of the door of inward privacy ; that as by the outward closing the senses of the body are not suffered to wander without, so the inward senses may ever be gathered unto their own inwardness. Wherefore love thou thine inward cell, and love the outward ; and give unto each its proper service. Let the outward cell shelter thee but not hide thee ; that thou mayest not sin the more secretly, but live the more securely. For thou that art yet a novice in this dwelling knowest not what thou owest to the cell, unless thou consider not only how thou art healed of thy faults therein, but also how thou needest not now to have strife with alien things. Thou knowest not what honour thou owest to thy conscience, if thou feel not therein the grace of the Holy Ghost and the bliss of inward sweetness. Give therefore to either cell its proper honour, and get for thyself the lordship therein. Learn in it to master thyself according to the laws of the common institution, to compose thy living and order thy manners, to judge thyself, to accuse thyself unto thyself, to condemn thyself often and let not thyself go unpunished. Let justice sit in judgment ; let conscience stand arraigned and accusing herself. None loveth thee more ; none will judge thee more faithfully.

29. In the morning, make an examination of thyself for the night that is past, and bid thyself be wary for the day that now cometh. At evening, ask an account of thyself for the day that is gone, and lay a charge upon the night that followeth. If thou busy thyself

that the phrase *omnium interiorum tuorum interior Deus* has a very close counterpart in his *Speculum Fidei* (382 C) : *Omnibus enim interioribus nostris interior Deus. . . .*

thus, thou wilt lack time to wax wanton. To each hour, according to the canon of the common rule, give its own exercises; spiritual to the spiritual, bodily to the bodily; wherein every debt ought to be paid, by the soul to God, by the body to the soul; that if anything have been left undone or imperfect, in its own manner, its own place, its own time, it may not depart without chastisement such as it deserveth. Wherein beside those hours of which the Psalmist saith, *seven times in the day I have spoken praise unto Thee*,[1] the morning and evening sacrifice, and the midnight, are chiefly to be observed. For not vainly doth the Prophet say: *In the morning will I stand before Thee, and see*,[2] but because we are then yet fasting from outward cares; and again, *Let my prayer be lifted up as incense in thy sight, the holding up of mine hands as the evening sacrifice;*[3] because we have then as it were digested such impediments. And in our night watches also (whereby we rise in the night to praise the name of the Lord) he maketh the same order of praise: *In the day*, saith he, *of my tribulation I sought God, and with my hands unto Him in the night, and I was not deceived.*[4] For at those hours we ought chiefly to set ourselves before God as it were face to face, and in the light of His countenance to consider, to find sorrow and tribulation unto ourselves, and to call upon the name of God, sweeping our spirit[5] until it groweth warm; going after the memory of the overflowing of His

[1] Ps. CXVIII. 164.
[2] Ps. V. 5.
[3] Ps. CXL. 2.
[4] Ps. LXXVI. 3.
[5] *Et scopebam spiritum meum.* Ps. LXXVI. 7.

sweetness[1] until He grow sweet in our hearts. But then we ought chiefly to do that which the Apostle hath spoken: *I would rather speak five words in the church with all my mind than ten thousand words without understanding;* and again, *I will sing in spirit, I will sing with understanding also; I will pray in spirit, I will pray with understanding also.*[2] For then the mind and the spirit are to gather up their fruits, that thereafter in the abundance of God's blessing we may go quietly unto the slumber of the night; and when we rise unto the praising of God, the tenour of our working may be wholly shapen and quickened in praise of him. Wherefore it is not expedient by anticipating of the night offices to weigh down the understanding with a multitude of psalms, to weary the spirit or to quench it.[3] But so long as the spirit is sober, it is to be touched with piety and directed unto God by its own way; till the heart is enlarged and the spirit beginneth to run to the end of the work of God; and after that it shall receive its right measure or tenour of fervour, unless it be cut short by great negligence or passed over by wilful wretchedness.

30. Moreover it is known to every man that hath the mind of Christ, how much it becometh Christian piety, how seemly and profitable it is to the servant of God and the servant of the redemption of Christ, for

[1] *Memoriam abundantiæ suavitatis tuæ eructabunt.* Ps. CXLIV. 7, a favourite text cited also in §§ 60 and 65 of this *Epistle*, and in his other works, *e.g.*, *Enigma*, 406.

[2] 1 Cor. XIV. 19, 15.

[3] He refers to the practice of reciting extra psalms and prayers before the Night Office. See Dom Berlière: *L'ascèse bénédictine* (1927), pp. 48, 49, 168. Such additional offices tended to grow to excess.

one hour of the day at the least to consider diligently the benefits of His passion and redeeming, to enjoy them sweetly in conscience and lay them up faithfully in the mind ; and this is spiritually to eat the Body of Christ and to drink His Blood in memory of Him, who bade all that believe in Him *Do this for a commemoration of Me*.[1] Wherein also because of the sin of disobedience it is evident to all men how wicked [2] a thing it is for man to forget that so great goodness [2] of God ; seeing that it is a grievous thing to forget the memory of a man that is thy friend, when he departeth, under what sign soever he leave thee that memory. For to celebrate the mystery of this holy and awful commemoration belongeth to a few men only, to whom this ministry is committed, and that in its proper manner, time, and place ; but the thing signified by this sacrament and mystery may at all times and in all places where God reigneth, and in the manner commanded—that is, with the affection of seemly piety—be readily accomplished, handled, and taken unto themselves by all men to whom it is said : *For ye are a chosen nation, a kingly priesthood, a holy generation, a purchased people ; that ye may declare the wonders of Him who hath called you from darkness into His marvellous light*.[3] For the Sacrament indeed is received by the worthy unto life, by the unworthy unto death and judgment ; but the thing signified no man receiveth

[1] Luke xxii. 19.

[2] *Impium . . . pietatis.*

[3] 1 Peter ii. 9. The best commentary on this passage is provided by his own words in his tenth Meditation : " As often as we celebrate our Redemption in devout and earnest prayer, so often is its effect produced in us."

save the just and worthy. For to receive the Sacrament without the thing signified is death; but to receive the thing signified, though it be without the Sacrament, is eternal life. And if thou wilt, and truly wilt, this is in thy cell with thee at every hour whether of day or night. For as often as in commemoration of Him that suffered for thee thou art moved in piety and in faith by this deed of His, so often thou eatest His Body and drinkest His Blood. So long as thou abidest in Him by love, and He in thee by the working of holiness and justice, so long thou art accounted to be of His body and His members.

31. Furthermore, thou shouldst spend certain hours in certain reading.[1] For to read now here, now there, such things as hap and fortune may send thee—this edifieth not, but maketh the soul unstable: for lightly such reading is taken in, and more lightly it passeth away from the mind. But thou oughtest to tarry with certain minds, and accustom thy soul to them. For the Scriptures crave to be read in that spirit wherein they were made; and in the same spirit they are to be understood.[2] Thou wilt never attain to the understanding of Paul till by use of good intention in reading of him and study of continual meditation thou drink in his spirit. Thou wilt never come unto understanding of David till by very proof thou put on the very

[1] *Cf.* Rule of St. Benedict, Chap. XLVIII.

[2] In his *Vita Bernardi* (§§ 23 and 24), describing St. Bernard's study of the Scriptures, he tells us that the saint attributed his understanding of their meaning to the meditation and prayer in the fields and woods—where oaks and beeches were his only teachers—which followed his reading. In this way, says William, he became full of the spirit wherewith all Scripture is inspired, and able to use it with such confidence and such marvellous effect.

affections of the Psalms ; and so with the rest. And in all scripture study differeth as much from reading as friendship from hospitality, or the affection to a friend from chance salutation. Also from thy daily reading thou shouldst commit somewhat to the inward parts of thy memory, to be more faithfully digested, brought up again and more often ruminated ; such a thing as shall be fitting to thy rule and profitable to thy intent, that shall occupy thy mind so that thou desire not to think on alien things. Affection is often to be drawn from the course of thy reading and a prayer to be shapen that interrupteth thy reading, yet not so much hindereth it by interruption as it restoreth thy mind more pure thereafter to the understanding of that which thou readest. Reading serveth intention. If he that readeth seeketh God truly in his reading, all things soever that he readeth work together to him for good, and his understanding taketh and subdueth all the meaning of his reading to the service of Christ. But if his mind turn to other things, it draweth everything after itself, and findeth nothing so holy and sacred in the Scriptures but he will turn it—whether through vainglory, a perverse mind or a corrupt understanding—either to wickedness or to vanity. For in reading all Scriptures the beginning must be the fear of the Lord, that in it the intent of the reader be first established and out of it proceed and be ordered the understanding and meaning of all that is read.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

MEASURE IS APPOINTED IN BODILY EXERCISES, IN FOOD AND IN SLEEP

32. Let not spiritual exercises be forsaken for bodily, wholly or for long time; but let the mind learn easily to return to them, and when it turneth itself to these, let it ever cling to those. For (as hath been before said) the man is not for the woman, but the woman for the man; nor are spiritual things for the fleshly, but the fleshly for the spiritual. By bodily, I intend now those exercises that are accomplished bodily by labour of the hands. For there are other bodily exercises also, wherein the body must needs labour, as watchings, fastings and other such; but these things hinder not the spiritual, but help them rather, so they be reasonably and discreetly done. But if by the failing of indiscretion they are so performed that either with fainting of the spirit or with weakness of the body the spiritual things are hindered, he that so doeth hath taken away from his body the fruit of good work, from his spirit its affection, from his neighbour an example, from God His honour; he is a sacrilegious man, and guilty of all these things before God. Not that (according to the words of the Apostle) this also seemeth not human,[1] or that it is not sometimes meet, right and just for

[1] Rom. vi. 19.

the head to ache in the service of the Lord which did often labour even to aching in the vanity of the world; or for the belly to be hungry even to groaning that hath often been filled even unto vomiting: but measure is to be kept in all things. The body is sometimes to be afflicted, but not to be crushed. For bodily exercise serveth unto little, but piety is profitable unto all things.[1] Wherefore care of the flesh should be had, though not in lusts, yet unto a little. And this care should be sober, with some spiritual discipline, so that there appear not in the manner or kind or greatness of it anything that becometh not a servant of God. For about our dishonourable parts we ought to put a more abundant honour, but our honourable parts have no need thereof.[2] And not only this, but we ought to present all our life, though it be unseen of men, comely and fair unto God, and to make all our conversation meet to be beheld by the holy Angels, and delectable to them, though it be enclosed within the walls of our house. *Let all that ye do*, saith the Apostle, *be done decently among you.*[3] For modesty is a thing acceptable unto God and beloved of the holy Angels. Wherefore the Apostle also biddeth women to be covered because of the Angels.[4] And since the Angels are without doubt both day and night with you in your cells, guarding you, rejoicing in your studies and working together with you, it is their pleasure that all that ye do, even though no man see, be done modestly.

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 8.
[2] 1 Cor. xii. 23, 24.
[3] *Ibid.*, xiv. 40.
[4] *Ibid.*, xi. 10.

33. Whether therefore ye eat or whether ye drink or whatsoever ye do, do all in the Lord [1] in a good, holy and religious fashion. If thou eatest, let thy table (which of itself is somewhat sober) be adorned by thy sobriety. And when thou eatest, eat not with the whole man, but while the body receiveth its refreshment let not the soul neglect hers, but meditating on some thought of the sweetness of the Lord, or some Scripture that shall be food for her, or at least calling to mind the same, let her ruminate and digest it within herself. And let necessity itself be satisfied not after the manner of the world or the flesh, but as it fitteth a monk and becometh a servant of God. For even in that which concerneth the body's health the more modestly and in order food is taken and eaten, the more easily and healthfully it is digested. Wherefore a time and measure in eating are to be observed, and a kind and quantity in the food: and strange and superfluous spices are to be avoided. A measure of eating, I say, is to be observed that he that eateth spend not his mind upon all manner of food: a time, that he eat not before the hour; the kind, that he use such food as the community of the brotherhood, unless for the cause of evident necessity. And for spices and seasonings let it suffice, I pray you, that our food be such as may be eaten, not delectable or such as may be lusted after. For sufficient unto lust is the evil thereof; for since it can never or scarce ever attain to the end of satisfying necessity, save by the road of overmuch delight, if it begin to be wilfully provoked by those who have taken upon them a

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31.

perpetual war against the delights of it, then are there two against one, and so continence is imperilled.

34. Then as hath been said of food, so let it be said of sleep. Take heed as far as thou mayest, O servant of God, that thou never sleep wholly, lest thy sleep be not the rest of a weary body but the burying of one stifled; not the refreshing, but the quenching of thy spirit. Sleep is a thing suspect, and in great part like to drunkenness. For besides vices, which in a man sleeping there is none to resist (seeing that with the body the reason slumbereth also), in that which regardeth the duty of continual perfection, no time is so much lost from our life as that which is given to sleep. So then when thou goest to thy bed, bear with thee ever in the memory or imagination something wherein thou mayest quietly pass to sleep, or it may be pleasantly dream thereon; something that may await thee when thou wakenest and restore thee unto the state of yesterday's intention. So shall thy *night be enlightened as the day, and night shall be thy enlightening in thy delights*.[1] Thou shalt go to sleep quietly, rest in peace, lightly awake; and when thou risest thou shalt be ready and nimble to return to that which thou didst not wholly forsake before. For upon sober food and a sober body followeth sober sleep.[2] But a carnal and brutish sleep and such as is called Lethæan is to be abominated by the servant of God. But that wherefrom after meet repose it is easy to call back the

[1] Ps. CXXXVIII. 12, 11.

[2] Of St. Bernard he says: *In ipso namque tenuem victum tenuis somnus comitatur*, and describes him as exceeding in austerity the severe *régime* of food and sleep which is here enjoined (*Vita Bernardi*, §§ 21, 22). See also §§ 36, 37.

senses of mind and body, and to arouse and send them forth as it were the servants of the master of the house, unto works necessary to the spirit—such sleep as this in its own time and place is not to be despised. A prudent mind and one dedicate to God ought so to bear itself in its cell and in its conscience as a prudent master in his own house. He ought not to have, as Solomon saith, a wife that scoldeth [1] in his house (that is, his flesh) but one governed unto sobriety and accustomed to obedience, prepared to labour, ready always to be hungry and to be filled, to abound and to suffer poverty.[2] Let him have his outward senses not as lords but as servants ; his inward, sober and diligent. Let him have the whole house and family of his thoughts so ordered and disciplined that he may say to one, *Go*, and he shall go ; and to another, *Come*, and he shall come ; and to the body his servant, *Do this*, and without contradiction he shall do it.[3] He that ordereth himself thus and ruleth in his conscience, may best be given over and entrusted to himself in his cell. But this belongeth to the perfect, or to those that are beginning to be perfected ; but we have set it before beginners and novices that they may know what is lacking to them and that they may extend the intention of their zeal.

[1] Proverbs xxi. 19.
[2] Phil. iv. 12.
[3] Matt. viii. 9 ; Luke vii. 8.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

WHO ARE THE MEET INHABITANTS OF A CELL; SUMPTUOUS BUILDINGS ARE REPROVED

35. It is to be understood that when we speak of fleshly or sensual feeling, of rational knowledge and of spiritual wisdom, we describe one man in whom all these things may at divers times be found, according to the affections of his intent and according as he advanceth and goeth forward; and also that these three kinds of men, every one according to the properties of their state, do together in the cell combat in the profession of the religious life; albeit the dignity of the cell, the secrecy of holy solitude and the name of solitary profession seem to become those only who are perfect. For to these, as the Apostle saith, *strong meat belongeth; to them who by custom have exercised their senses unto the discerning of good and evil.*[1] Wherein although the rational man, who is nearest to the wise, might seem worthy to be suffered, yet certainly the sensual man, who perceiveth not the things that are God's, would seem meet to be kept far therefrom. But here meeteth us the Apostle Peter saying: *If they also received the Holy Spirit even as we, who was I that I should fight against God?*[2] For the holy spirit is a

[1] Heb. v. 14.
[2] Acts xi. 17.

good will, and not without great scruple of mind should a man be kept from any height of profession if he have a witness of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him and drawing him, namely a good will. For dwellers in the cell are to be taken from two kinds of men: that is, either from simple men that both in will and in feeling appear fervent and humble to follow the wisdom of religion; or from wise men that are manifestly zealous after the holy simplicity of religion. But for foolish pride, and proud foolishness—let them ever be far from the tabernacle of the just. Now all pride is foolish, albeit not all foolishness is proud. For foolishness without pride proveth sometimes to be simplicity; if it is ignorant, perhaps it may be taught; and if it may not be taught, perhaps it may be led. And the true city of refuge unto simplicity is the living in religion; unless it be such as will not be humbled, or so brutish that it will not be ruled or led. Yet a good will, even though it be very brutish, is nevertheless not to be forsaken, but by salutary counsel to be turned unto a laborious and active life. But a proud will, however wise it seem to itself to be, is to be dismissed to itself, and sent away. For if a proud man be suffered to come in, on the first day of his dwelling in the house he beginneth to give laws to all men; but the man that is over-foolish cannot so much as learn those that he findeth. Therefore it is a matter to be weighed carefully and wisely, who shall be admitted to living with himself.[1] For he that

[1] *Ad habitandum secum.* The phrase seems reminiscent of St. Gregory's description of St. Benedict's solitary life at Subiaco: *Solus in superni Spectatoris oculis habitavit secum* (*Dial.* II., cap. 3).

liveth with himself hath with himself only himself, such as he is. Now an evil man liveth never in safety with himself, because he liveth with an evil man; and no one doeth him more harm than he doeth to himself. For men that are mad and out of their wits, or for what cause soever are not masters of themselves, are wont to be guided, and not left or committed unto themselves, lest they make ill use of their solitude. Therefore let sensual men and poor in spirit be admitted to live in the cell; but this to the end that they may become rational and spiritual, not that because of them those that have already attained unto this may turn backwards and become sensual. Let them be received in all charitable good will; let them be borne with in all kindly patience. But let not those that take compassion on them be conformed unto them; nor so seek the advancing of these that because of them they be bound to fall into some failing from the strictness of religion professed by them.

36. And now there hath begun to come in upon us, using money that was borrowed, the sumptuous building of cells and such as modesty scarce may suffer.[1] The holy simplicity and rusticity which as Solomon declareth was made by the Most High,[2] this hath been cast away, and we make to ourselves as it were splendours of religious habitations. Wherein so much hath been allowed to the animal that wellnigh all of us have

[1] Ecclus. VII. 16.

[2] The magnificence of their buildings was one of the counts in the Cistercian indictment of the Cluniacs and William was wholly in sympathy with the criticism. See especially his description of the "*aurea sæcula*" or golden age of Clairvaux, when the simplicity of the buildings testified to the humility and poverty of their occupants. *Vita Bernardi*, § 35.

become animal in this. For the shape of poverty duly handed down by our fathers to us their heirs, the form of holy simplicity, the true glory of the house of God—these we have cast away from us and our cells and by the hands of cunning artificers we build us cells not eremitical but aromatical, for the price of a hundred crowns [1] apiece, using the alms of the poor unto the lusts of our eyes. Cut off, O Lord, the reproach of a hundred crowns from the cells of thy poor. Why not a hundred pence rather, or none? Why should not the sons of grace build for themselves without money? [2] What was the answer given to Moses when he finished the tabernacle? *Lo*, saith the Lord, *make all things according to the pattern that was shown thee upon the mount*.[3] Not by men of this world ought the tabernacle of God with men to be made. They to whom in the height of their mind [4] is shown the pattern of the true glory of the house of God, let them build unto themselves. They whom the care for their own inward things admonisheth to despise and neglect all outward things, let them build unto themselves the shape of poverty, the form of holy simplicity, the lines of paternal temperance. For no industry of artificers will shape these so well as the neglect of them.

37. Therefore I beseech you, in the pilgrimage of this world, in this warfare upon earth, let us build us

[1] *Solidi*.
[2] *Gratis filii gratiæ*. . . .
[3] Exodus xxv. 40.
[4] *In altitudine mentis*. There is a play upon *mons* (mount) and *mens* (mind). Massuet here reads *montis*, but in that is not followed by Migne. In other cases also Migne has followed Mabillon's text.

not houses to be dwelt in but tents and tabernacles to be forsaken ; seeing that we shall soon be called thence and pass to our own land and our own city, and into the house of our everlastingness.[1] For we dwell in a camp ; we fight and we labour upon others' ground. That is easy whatsoever is according to nature. Is it not easy to a solitary, to nature sufficient, to conscience profitable, to weave himself a cell of boughs, to plaster it with clay, to cover it whencesoever he pleaseth, and to dwell therein in all modesty ? And what more is to be desired ? Believe, my brethren, and hope ye shall not need to prove it, that those goodly shows and outward splendours soon blunt the manly intent and make womanish the firm will. For though by very custom those delights be oftentimes deadened, and though there be some who use such things as though they used them not, yet affections for such things are better uprooted and overcome by despising of them than by using of them. For the inward things of us are touched not a little by the things without us, which are made and shapen unto the likeness of the mind and after their own fashion answer to a good intent.[2] For a more humble appearance in things refraineth lust in some, and in others moveth the conscience with love of poverty. Moreover, to a mind occupied with its own inward things it is more becoming that its outward things be uncared

[1] *Ibit homo in domum æternitatis suæ.* Eccles. XII. 5.

[2] And so he agrees with Plato that our surroundings are of vital importance, and then prescribes a contrary treatment of them, banishing the distraction of beauty. In this respect the Cistercian reform failed magnificently ; for see in our own country the splendid traces Cistercians have left at Rievaulx, Byland, etc., etc.

for and neglected, whereby the mind itself is known to have oftentimes its conversation otherwhere. For the holy intention declareth itself to be more occupied in another place, and accordeth its interior right well with the conscience when it telleth it that all exterior things are become as nothing to it. I beg therefore that these more delicate cells remain even as they have been made, but that the number of them increase not. Let them be as hospitals to the weaker and more sensual brethren, until they become strong ; that is, until they begin to desire not the hospitals of the sick but the tents of them that fight in the camp of God. Let them remain for an example to your posterity, that ye had such things, and did despise them.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

BY THE EXAMPLE OF ANCIENT MONKS, HERMITS, AND THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST AND FIRST FAITHFUL SOULS, HE EXHORTETH TO MODESTY, TO SHUNNING OF IDLENESS, AND TO LOVE OF POVERTY

38. But ye that are spiritual, even as the people of the Jews, that is to say pilgrims, not having here a city that long abideth, but seeking one to come,[1] build unto yourselves huts to dwell in, as ye have begun. For in huts our fathers dwelt, dwelling in the land of promise as in a strange land; looking with the heirs of the promise for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; not having received the promises but seeing them afar off and saluting them, confessing that they are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. For they that speak thus signify that they seek a better country, that is a heavenly.[2] Therefore our fathers in Egypt and the Thebaid, having a most fervent zeal for this most holy life, dwelling in solitudes, distressed and afflicted, of whom the world was not worthy,[3] built them cells wherein they were covered only and compassed about, and preserved from the rain and tempest, wherein, flowing over with the delights of eremitical simplicity they made many rich,

[1] Heb. xiii. 14.
[2] *Ibid.*, xi. 9–16.
[3] *Ibid.* 37, 38.

being themselves needy.[1] And I know not by what name I may most worthily call such, whether heavenly men or earthly angels, dwelling indeed on earth, but having their conversation in heaven. They laboured with their hands, and of their labour they fed the poor; being themselves hungry, from the desert of the wilderness they nourished the prisoners of towns and the sick, and sustained men set in any necessity, living by their toil, dwelling in the labour of their hands.

39. What shall we say unto this, we that are not only animal but animals of the earth, cleaving unto the earth and unto the senses of the flesh, walking in the feeling of our flesh and hanging upon the hands of others? Yet let Him be some comfort to us in this, who though He was rich, yet became poor for our sakes,[2] and who gave the precept of voluntary poverty and Himself did deign to show us the pattern of that same poverty in Himself. For that the poor of the gospel may know what they ought to do, He Himself was willing to be fed by the faithful; and sometimes from them that were not of the faithful (but that he might make them such) refused not to receive the things necessary unto life. And with what care and what piety the holy Apostles saw that those holy poor were fed by the faithful who in the primitive Church had suffered the loss of their goods for Christ's sake, or according unto the counsel of perfection had left all things and sold them, and had given them to the faithful brethren in common—to this both the book

[1] II Cor. VI. 10.
[2] *Ibid.*, VIII. 9.

of the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul in his Epistles, do manifestly witness. And if it is freely suffered by the very precepts and ordering of the Lord that the messengers of the gospel should live by the gospel, it is not denied either by the authority of the Apostles to those that live according unto the gospel, as to those holy poor who were then at Jerusalem; for they are called holy poor for this very cause, that they enrolled themselves in the profession of holiness and of a common life, and of their own will made themselves poor for this cause. For as for that which the Apostle with strict authority declareth to some, that he who will not work ought not to eat, he straightway showeth of whom he spoke, and addeth these words: *For we have heard that certain men walk disorderly among you, working not at all, but curiously meddling. Now to such as these we declare and beseech in the Lord Jesus Christ that working in silence they eat their own bread.*[1] *Their own*, that is to say, gotten and won by their own labour. Nevertheless, lest he should seem as it were to have rejected and cast out those men, albeit they were disorderly, and working not at all, but curiously meddling, yet having the name of the Lord invoked upon them, he addeth straightway: *But do ye, brethren, never weary in good works in Christ Jesus our Lord;* as who should say: And though they continue in their wickedness or their negligence, yet do ye in sustaining them weary not in your well-doing.

40. Seeing then that he declareth first most strictly that they who work not ought not to eat, but afterwards showeth himself somewhat more clement to

[1] II Thess. III. 10–12.

those that would work, but work not, we might say according to the letter of his words (nor would it be far from truth) that the former strictness was held out to those that are able but will not, but the latter indulgence to them that would, but are not able. Moreover when he declareth unto them, and beseecheth them in the Lord Jesus Christ, to eat their own bread in silence, it seemeth that they eat not their own bread unless they make it their own by working, so far as they are able to work according to the testimony of God and of their conscience. Pardon us, O Lord, pardon us; we make shifts to excuse ourselves, but there is none that may hide himself from the light of Thy truth, which as it enlighteneth them that turn to it, so it smiteth them that turn away. For our bones are not hid from Thee, which Thou didst make out of the sight of men[1]; but we make them to be out of our own sight, because there is scarce anyone who in those things that belong to Thee will essay what he is able to do, and what he may often do right readily to the will of the flesh or the world, whether fear move or desire draw him. But although we may deceive ignorant men, suffer not that wishing as it were to deceive Thee we deceive ourselves. We work not, either because we are not able, or because we seem to ourselves not to be able, or because by the use of idleness and delights we make ourselves not to be able.

41. Let us adore then ever, and fall down and weep before Thee our Maker,[2] who because of our manifest sin by Thy secret judgment hast shapen us even thus,

[1] Ps. cxxxviii. 15.
[2] Ps. xciv. 6.

that perchance because we are not very willing in this we cannot, or because we would not when we could, we cannot when we would. Let us eat our bread according to Adam's penalty; if we may not in the sweat of our face, at the least in the sorrow of our heart; in the tears of sorrow, if we may not in the sweat of labour. Let this great thing that is lacking be filled up by the piety of our profession and the devotion of a humble conscience. Be our tears our bread day and night, for so long as they say to our soul, *Where is thy God?* [1] that is to say, for as long as we stray from the Lord our God and from the light of His countenance.[2] One thing indeed was needful [3]; but we that are neither fixed in one thing nor exercised in many, in what order shall we be accounted? Would that with him of whom the Apostle saith: *To him who worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is accounted unto justice according to the purpose of the grace of God;* [4] would that with the sinful woman to whom much was forgiven because she loved much,[5] our souls may so be blessed and deserve to be justified with this judgment before the Lord, with the judgment of those that love the Lord, that leaving aside all judgment of good works and faith in merits we may

[1] Ps. XLI. 4.

[2] Reading *Quamdiu peregrinamur a Domino Deo nostro et a lumine vultus ejus* with the four MSS., and against the printed texts. William makes very frequent use of this text (II Cor. v. 6: *Dum sumus in corpore peregrinamur a Domino*), *e.g.*, *Speculum*, 365 B and 368 A; *Enigma*, 400 A, 406 C, 416 B. Mabillon has *peregrinatur . . . nostro . . . sui;* Massuet *peregrinatur . . . suo . . . ejus;* Migne follows Mabillon.

[3] Luke x. 42.

[4] Rom. IV. 5.

[5] Luke VII. 47.

be justified by this alone, that we loved much. For in loving Thee, O God, is a great reward to the soul that loveth, even Thy love itself, and afterwards eternal life. Wherefore I beseech you, brethren, let us not excuse ourselves, but accuse ourselves and confess. And we who in the sight of men wear the shadow of a great name [1] and as it were a mask and likeness of perfection, knowing the poverty of our conscience in the sight of God let us never draw back from the truth ; and the truth shall make us free.[2]

[1] *Cf.* Lucan I. 135 : *Stat magni nominis umbra ;* and Quintilian, XII., 10, 15 : *Umbra magni nominis delitescunt.* Also St. Bernard's first sermon for the Feast of the Circumcision : *Neque enim ad instar priorum meus iste Jesus nomen vacuum aut inane portat. Non est in eo magni nominis umbra, sed veritas.*

[2] John VIII. 32.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

HOW THE SENSUAL BEGINNER, OR RELIGIOUS NOVICE, IS TO BE TAUGHT TO DRAW NIGH TO GOD BY LOVE AND PRAYER

42. THEREAFTER the animal man that beginneth, and he that is Christ's novice, is to be taught to draw nigh to God, that God also may draw nigh to Him. For so the prophet admonisheth: *Draw ye nigh to God, and He shall draw nigh to you.*[1] For a man needeth not only to be made and shapen, but also to be quickened. For in the beginning God shaped man, and then breathed upon his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul.[2] This shaping of man is the forming of his manners; his life is the love of God. This is conceived by faith, born of hope, shapen and quickened by charity. For the love of God, or God that is love, that is to say the Holy Spirit, poureth Himself into the love of man and winneth it to Himself. And God in man loving Himself maketh one with Him both his spirit and his love.[3] For as the body hath not whence

[1] Jas. IV. 8.
[2] Gen. II. 7.
[3] Using the terminology of the author we may fairly say that this is the sort of passage that shocks the "rational man" and makes him speak of pantheism, but rejoices the "spiritual man" and seems to him to be a just description of the facts. Father Baker, having said the same thing in his own words, quotes it with great approval (*Sancta Sophia, ed.* Sweeney, pp. 42, 43). See the Introduction and § 62.

it may live, save by its spirit, so the affection of man, which is called love, liveth not, that is, loveth not God, save in the Holy Spirit. Wherefore the love of God, born in man by grace, is suckled by reading, fed by meditation, strengthened and enlightened by prayer. Now to the animal man and him that is new in Christ the best and safest things that may be offered for exercising his inward acts are the reading and meditating the outward acts of our Redeemer,[1] in which is shown the pattern of humility, exhortation to charity, and affection unto piety; as also the moral and more simple parts of the Sacred Scriptures and of the writings of holy Fathers. There should also be offered to him the lives and passions of the saints: wherein he needeth not to toil over the plain of history, and wherein he may continually come upon something that shall inflame his unskilful mind to the love of God and contempt of himself. Moreover, other histories do delight indeed while they are being read, but they edify not, nay rather they defile the mind; and in time of prayer or spiritual meditation they make unprofitable and hurtful things to spring up in the memory. But modesty of reading is wont to be followed by meditation like to itself. Furthermore, the reading of hard scriptures wearieth the tender

[1] This is the teaching also of St. Bernard, the great apostle of the characteristic devotion of the Middle Ages, to the Humanity of Christ. William says the same thing in *Cant.* 478 B. His tenth Meditation is a humble prayer that he may be allowed in his littleness and imperfection to "embrace the manger of Thy birth, to adore Thy infancy, to tread the steps of Thy passion, to hold and kiss Thy risen feet, to put my hands into the place of the nails, and cry: My Lord and my God." But the whole deserves quotation, especially the address to our Lord as the Door. St. Bonaventure follows here.

mind and refresheth it not; it breaketh the intention, and dulleth the mind and feeling.

43. He must also be taught in his prayer to lift up his heart, to pray spiritually, and as far as in him lieth to forsake bodies and bodily images when he thinketh on God. He must be admonished to intend with as much purity of heart as he may unto Him to whom he offereth the sacrifice of his prayer; to consider also himself that offereth and to understand that which he offereth; for in so far as he seeth and understandeth Him to whom he offereth, in so far he hath Him in affection, and his understanding Him is love; and in so far as he hath Him in affection, in so far he knoweth if that which he offereth is worthy of Him: and so he hath delight in God. Before such a man when he turneth to prayer or meditation, it is better and safer (as hath been said) that there be set the image of the Humanity of Our Lord, His Birth, Passion, and Resurrection; that the weakly soul that knoweth not how to think on aught save bodies and bodily things may have somewhat that it may be drawn to, to cling to it after its measure, with the gaze of love. For then Our Lord hath the form of the Mediator, in whom as is said in Job, *a man looking upon his likeness shall not sin*[1]: that is to say, when he fixeth the gaze of his intention upon Him, by considering the human likeness in God, he forsaketh never the truth, and while through faith he severeth not God from man, he learneth at length to apprehend God in man.[2]

[1] Job v. 24.

[2] The "programme" of the Preface for Christmas: *Ut dum visibiliter Deum cognoscimus, per hunc in invisibilium amorem rapiamur.*

Wherein to the poor in spirit and more simple sons of God, affection is wont at first to be so much the sweeter as it is nearer to human nature. But afterward when faith changeth unto affection, embracing in the midst of their hearts, with the sweet embrace of love, Christ Jesus all man with respect to the manhood He put on, all God with respect to the Godhead that put on man, they begin to know Him no longer according to the flesh, though they may not yet consider Him fully according to the Godhead. And by sanctifying Him in their hearts they are fain to offer Him the vows that their lips have uttered; the supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings, fitting unto time and cause.

44. For there are some prayers which are short and simple, according as the will shapeth them, or the necessity of him that prayeth for some cause in especial; others more long and full of reason, such as in seeking after the truth ask, seek, and knock until they receive and find and it is opened unto them; others that are swift, spiritual and fruitful, in the affection of one that enjoyeth and the gladness of grace that enlighteneth. And these are they that the Apostle in another order rehearseth, *supplications*, *prayers*, *petitions*, *thanksgivings*.[1] For petition, which we set down first, hath regard to the obtaining temporal goods and certain necessary things of this life, wherein God approveth indeed the good will of him that beseecheth, but doeth nevertheless that which he judgeth best, giving freely to a man that which he asketh well. This is that prayer whereof the Psalmist saith: *For my prayer hath been in the good*

[1] 1 Tim. II. 1.

pleasure of them hitherto.[1] This is the good pleasure even of ungodly men, because it belongeth indeed unto all, but especially to the sons of this world, to desire the tranquillity of peace, the body's health, kindliness of the seasons, and other things that regard the profit of this life, and necessity, and the pleasure of them that abuse the same. Now they that in good faith ask for such things, albeit they ask them not save unto necessity, nevertheless do even in this submit their will unto God. But supplication is the careful importunity unto God in spiritual exercises; wherein before grace cometh to help, he that addeth knowledge addeth sorrow also.[2] And prayer is the affection of a man that clingeth to God, a homely and pious speaking, a standing of the enlightened soul unto enjoying, for so long as may be.[3] Lastly the giving of thanks is in the understanding, and an unfailing untiring intention of a good will to God following on the knowledge of the grace of God, albeit at some times outward action or inward affection either be not present or be sluggish when it is present. For this is that whereof the Apostle saith: *To will lieth nigh unto me, but how to perform the good I find not*[4]: as who should say: To will is ever present with me, but at times it lieth down, that is, it is feeble; for I seek

[1] Ps. CXL. 5.

[2] Eccles. I. 18.

[3] *Oratio vero est hominis Deo adhærentis affectio, et familiaris quædam et pia allocutio, et statio illuminatæ mentis ad fruendum, quamdiu licet.* So does he define his "pure prayer," and this is the prayer that he is chiefly interested in. To distinguish it as a species of the genus "prayer," it might be called "communion," as has been done in the Introduction.

[4] Rom. VII. 18.

to perform the good work, but find not how. This is the charity that never falleth away.[1] For this is that prayer without ceasing, or that giving of thanks, whereof the Apostle saith: *Praying without ceasing, continually giving thanks.*[2] For it is a perpetual goodness of the soul and of the mind rightly ordered, and a likeness in the sons of God to the goodness of God the Father, praying ever for all men, and giving thanks in all things; after as many manners in prayer or thanksgiving pouring itself continually into God as pious affection findeth cause and matter for the same in its own necessities or consolations, in sorrowing with its neighbour or in rejoicing with him. Now this is ever occupied in giving of thanks, because he that is thus is ever in the joy of the Holy Ghost.

45. In petitions therefore we ought piously and faithfully to pray, but we ought not clingingly to remain in them, because we know not, but our Heavenly Father knoweth, which among those temporal things is needful to us.[3] And we ought to continue in supplications, but in all humility and patience, because they bear no fruit save in patience. For sometimes when heavenly grace cometh not quickly, to him that beseecheth the heaven becometh as it were of brass, and his own earth of iron.[4] And whereas the hardness of man's heart, being left to itself, deserveth not to be answered, the anxiousness of him that desireth thinketh that to be denied him, whatsoever is deferred. And

[1] 1 Cor. XIII. 8.
[2] 1 Thess. V. 17, 18.
[3] Matt. VI. 8.
[4] *Fit obsecranti cælum æneum et terra sua ferrea. Cf. Med.* 243 C: *Fit nobis cælum æneum et terra ferrea;* and *Cant.* 545 D: *Fit cælum æneum et terra ferrea;* all describing the same experience.

when like the Canaanitish woman [1] it groaneth to be despised and passed over, it imagineth the uncleanness of its flesh and its past sins to be imputed to it, or rebuked. And sometimes not [2] without labour, asking it receiveth, seeking it findeth, and to it knocking it is opened; and the labour of supplication deserveth at length to find the sweets and consolations of prayer.

46. And sometimes the affection of a pure prayer or that good sweetness of prayer is not found, but in a manner findeth [3]; when as it asketh not, seeketh not, knocketh not, and as it were knoweth not, grace runneth before it; so that the tribe of servants is received at the sons' table, when the new and imperfect soul is taken up into that affection of prayer which as a reward of sanctity is wont to be given to the merits of the perfect. When this falleth out so, it is either to the end that the unheeding soul unto its own judgment may not be ignorant what it is that it heedeth not, or else that the stirring of charity may kindle in him the love of that grace which offereth itself unasked.[4] In which thing, alas! many are deceived, because when they feed on the bread of sons [5]

[1] Matt. xv. 22.

[2] Reading *non sine labore* with Massuet and Migne. Mabillon omits *non*.

[3] This onrush of prayer, finding rather than found, is described also in *Cant.* 480 D.

[4] The text is uncertain here, and Migne, printing Mabillon's, prints also Massuet's as an alternative. We translate Mabillon's, but reading *nescire* for *scire* and adding *gratiæ* before *ultro*: these things with the authority of the MSS.

[5] *Pane filiorum.* In the next century St. Thomas Aquinas was to write the well-known lines: *Vere panis filiorum, non mittendus canibus.* Both go back to our Lord's words to the woman of Canaan. Matt. xv. 26. In his second Meditation William regards himself as that woman and humbly supplicates in her person for the bread of grace.

they think themselves to be sons already; and falling back from that beginning whence they ought to go forward, because of the grace that visiteth them they forsake their conscience, thinking themselves to be somewhat when they are naught, and by the good things of God they are not amended but hardened; and they become like unto them of whom the Psalmist saith: *The enemies of the Lord have lied unto Him, and their time shall be for ever. And yet He fed them with the finest of wheat, and with honey from the rock He satisfied them.*[1] For they are fed sometimes by God the Father, being servants, with the more precious substance of grace, so that they boast themselves to be sons; but by abusing the grace of God they become His enemies. For that they may abuse even the Holy Scriptures in their sins or their lusts, returning to them through prayer, they speak to themselves that word of the wife of Manua: *If it had been the will of the Lord to slay us, He would not have received sacrifice from our hands.*[2]

47. How beloved are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, wherein the sparrow hath found himself a house, and the turtle-dove a nest where she may lay her young.[3] The sparrow is a creature that by nature is full of faults, fickle, wanton, importunate, chattering, and prone to lust. The turtle-dove is the friend of sorrow, the familiar inhabitant of shady solitudes, a pattern of simplicity and example of chastity. He hath found in God's tabernacles a house of peace and

[1] Ps. LXXX. 16, 17.

[2] Judges XIII. 23. Some MSS. make a division here and start a "Second Book," which arrangement is followed by Massuet and Migne.

[3] Ps. LXXXIII. 2, 4.

security; she a nest where she may lay her young. What are these if not the blood of young men, naturally hot, and their fervent mind, an age that slippeth lightly, an unquiet curiosity; and the other a manly maturity, a sober mind, chaste, grave, and weary so far as may be of outward things, hiding itself within itself? Whereof the one, in the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts and discipline of the cell, hath found for itself rest from all vices, the foundation of stability, and a mansion of security; the other within the secrecy of the cell hath found a more secret nook of the conscience, where it may lay and nurture the fruits of its holy affections and the feelings of spiritual contemplation. The solitary sparrow upon the housetop, that is on the height of contemplation, is wont to tread beneath it the dwelling-place of fleshly conversation. The turtle-dove below is made fruitful, and rejoiceth in the fruits of humility. For all perfect and spiritual men, who are signified by this name of turtle-dove, when they attain to the full establishing and strength of their virtue by the virtue of obedience and subjection, do ever humble themselves and cast themselves down into the state of beginners; and from that state whence they descend below themselves, they also rise up above themselves; and by humbling themselves they go forward the more, because of the fruits of solitude, which are high ecstasies coming oftentimes in contemplation; and this because they consider they ought not to neglect the feeling of voluntary subjection, the use of a common life, and the sweetness of brotherly charity.

48. Therefore the spiritual man, and he that useth

his body spiritually, deserveth to have the servitude thereof—which the animal man hath as it were compelled by force, and the rational man subdued by custom—as it were naturally bound to him. For whereas that man hath the obedience of necessity, this hath the obedience of charity. Whereas he hath virtues that are full of labour, this man hath them turned into customs. For these that are God's sparrows, striving upwards to the things that belong to the perfect, not in the presumption of high-mindedness but in the love of piety, being raised up in the poverty of their spirit, are not cast aside as men great in their own conceit, but received as men devout: and sometimes they deserve to feel that which the spiritual deserve to enjoy; and they labour ever to imitate the active life of them whose contemplative consolations they desire. Wherefore moving with one spirit, albeit not with one step, all do alike go forward, the spiritual in the lower place and the beginners in the higher place. And in this consisteth the holy conversation of rightly ordered cells, the reverend studies, toilsome leisures, laborious quiet and ordered charity [1] —in the speaking each to other in silence, and in absence from each other the enjoying of each other the more, and mutual advancing, although they see not each other mutually, the seeing in another that which is to be imitated, and in themselves that only which is to be wept for. *Ah for me*, as Jeremias saith, *a man that see my own poverty*,[2] when I consider

[1] Compare his description of the aspect of Clairvaux in its golden age, where again he speaks of *charitas ordinata* (*Vita Bernardi*, § 35).

[2] Lam. III. 1.

the riches of others, I blush and groan within myself, because that which I find in another's goods I would more gladly feel in my own. For of the two evils, it is the more tolerable not to see that which thou lovest than to see it and not to have it. Howbeit it is not so with the good things of the Lord; for to see the good things of the Lord is to love them, and to love them is to have them. Therefore, so far as we may, let us labour to see, that by seeing we may understand, and by understanding we may love, and by loving we may have.[1] O Lord, all my desire before Thee is for this, and my groaning is not hid from Thee.[2]

[1] This is his usual progression: *intellectus*, *amor*, *fruitio*. But it is to be understood that love and understanding are interlocked: *Tantum intelligitur quantum amatur, tantumque amatur quantum intelligitur*. *Cant.* 499 C. See what he says of knowledge and wisdom in the next section.

[2] Ps. xxxvii. 10.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

OF THE SECOND STATE OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE, THAT IS THE RATIONAL

49. Now passing from the animal state unto the rational, that from the rational we may pass to the spiritual—in treating thereof, and would that it were in advancing!—we must first know that Wisdom, as we read in the book that is called by her name, *preventeth them that desire her, and runneth to meet them, and showeth herself merrily in her ways*,[1] both in advancing and in meditating and treating thereof; *reaching unto every place because of her cleanness*.[2] For God favoureth with His countenance them that look upon Him, He moveth them and onward moveth, and the sight of the Sovereign Good draweth him that contemplateth it. And when reason advancing ascendeth upward unto love, to him that loveth and desireth, grace condescendeth. For the two things that make those two states oftentimes become one, that is to say, reason and grace; and so do they which proceed from them, that is to say knowledge and wisdom. Nor may those things be longer treated of or thought on apart, which are now one, and of one virtue and operation, both in the feeling of him that understandeth

[1] Wisd. VI. 14, 17.
[2] Wisd. VII. 24.

and in the bliss of him that enjoyeth. Therefore although they ought to be distinguished the one from the other, yet when the occasion suffereth, they are to be treated of and thought on the one with the other, and the one in the other. Now as hath before been said, even as in the beginning of religion the animal state keepeth watch over the body and outward man, that these be rightly ordered and shapen to the pursuit of virtue; so the rational state must busy itself with the spirit, either making a spirit if there be none, or if there be, tending it and ordering it. Wherefore we must first see what or what manner of thing is the spirit itself, which reason maketh reasonable; and what is that reason which by making a mortal creature rational, maketh it a man. But first we must speak of the soul.[1]

50. *Anima*, the soul, is an unbodied thing, capable of reason and made apt to quicken the body. This maketh men to be animal or sensual, having the wisdom of the flesh, and cleaving to the senses of the body. When this beginneth to be not only capable of perfect reason, but the source thereof, straightway this *anima* casteth

[1] The text here (and in the sections which follow) presents difficulties of translation, since the author gives to the words *anima*, *animus*, *spiritus*, *mens* an interpretation for which English—in the words *soul*, *spirit*, *mind*—has no precise equivalents. It is necessary, therefore, to be somewhat arbitrary in rendering them. We translate *anima* as *soul*, meaning by that the principle of animal and sense life. But when that soul is a rational soul and the principle also of rational life, then the author calls it *animus* or *spiritus* or *mens*, with no apparent differences of meaning. For these words we shall use *spirit* and *mind*, but must point out that *mind* here has a wider meaning than we usually give it, being (as *mens* with St. Augustine) the ultimate rational soul, the seat of the faculties, memory, understanding and will, and the basis of the spiritual, as of the rational and sense life.

away from itself its female kind, and becometh *animus*, the spirit partaking of reason, apt to the ruling of the body, and containing itself within itself. For while it is yet *anima*, it lightly becometh effeminate, even unto being fleshly; but *animus* or the spirit hath no thoughts of anything save of the manly and the spiritual. For the spirit is created in man a thing of subtle and active nature in seeking after good, and by the art of the wisdom that created it is better than any body, more full of light and more worthy than any bodily light, because of the image of the Creator and the capacity for reason; yet being caught in the defect of its fleshly origin it is made the servant of sin and a captive under the law of sin that is in the members.[1] Yet it hath not altogether lost its free will, that is the judgment of the reason in judging and discerning, albeit it hath lost its freedom in choosing and in doing.[2] For in punishment of sin, and for a witness of natural dignity lost, there is given to it for a sign a judgment, but a captive judgment. Now this, even before conversion and the freeing of the will, it can never lose altogether by any turning away of the will itself. And by it, even when it abuseth it by choosing evil instead of good, it is better, as hath been said, and worthier, than any bodily creature, both in itself and in the art of the Truth that created it. But the will is made free when it becometh charity; when the charity

[1] Rom. VII. 23.

[2] Mabillon's note on this passage is: "Whereas such a man is said to have lost this liberty, this is to be understood not of the liberty of nature but of the liberty of grace; since afterwards his will is said to be set free by charity." Migne very curiously prints Mabillon's text *in volendo et agendo*, but Massuet's note, which requires the text *in eligendo et agendo*.

of God is poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.[1] And now it is truly reason, that is an estate of the mind which in all things agreeth with the truth. For when the will is freed by the grace that freeth and the spirit beginneth to be led by the free reason, then is it its own indeed, having free use of itself, and becometh a spirit and a good spirit. A spirit, I say, inasmuch as it doth truly animate and perfect its animal soul[2] by the addition of free reason; and good, inasmuch as it now loveth its proper good whereby it becometh good and without which it could be neither good, nor spirit. And it becometh a good and rational spirit, loving the Lord its God with all its heart and with all its soul, and with all its mind, and its neighbour as itself. It becometh a good spirit, fearing God and keeping His commandments; for this is the whole man.[3] Now reason is thus defined by them that define,[4] or described by them that describe: It is an upward gazing of the mind wherein by itself and not by the body it contemplateth truth; or it is that very contemplation of truth; or the very truth that it contemplateth; or it is the life according to reason; or obedience according to reason, whereby it is conformed to the truth contemplated. But reasoning is reason's searching, that is, the movement of its gazing through those things that are to be looked upon. Reasoning seeketh, reason

[1] Rom. v. 5.
[2] *Animus . . . animans . . . animal.*
[3] Eccles. xii. 13.
[4] *Ratio vero sic diffinitur a diffinientibus. Cf. Enigma,* 413 B: *Diffinitur persona a diffinientibus . . .; Med.* 227 C: *Diffiniunt diffinientes.*

findeth. When this gaze hath been turned upon anything and seeth it, it is knowledge in man; when it is not able, it is ignorance. This then is reason, and the instrument by which it worketh, and the work which it worketh. This is wont ever to exercise itself in that which is profitable and honourable, advancing indeed by exercise, but by sloth pining away within itself.

51. Now no exercise is more worthy and profitable to the man that hath reason than exercise in that best part of him and that whereby he hath the pre-eminence over other creatures and over other parts of himself; and this is the mind or spirit itself. For to the mind or spirit, whereunto the rest of a man is subdued to be governed, nothing is either more worthy to be sought or more pleasant to be found or more profitable to be possessed than that which alone standeth above the mind itself; and that is God alone. Nor is He much removed from any one of us, seeing that in Him we live and move and are[1]; yet not as we do in this air about us, so do we in the Lord our God; but in Him we live by faith, we move, and onward move, by hope, we are set fast by love. For by Him and through Him our rational spirit hath been made, that its turning may be unto Him,[2] and that its good may be Himself. Now from Him that is good the spirit hath been made good, to His image and likeness: that so long as we live here on earth, the spirit by that likeness may

[1] Acts xvii. 27, 28.

[2] *Ego dilecto meo et ad me conversio ejus* (*Cant.* vii. 10). At the beginning of this sentence (*Ab ipso enim et per ipsum*) Massuet reads *ad* for *per*, and that may be the true reading, for William frequently uses the phrase *ad ipsum*. See *Cant.*, 480 C.

appeareth as far as may be unto him from whom it does not depart save by ignorance [1], that it may be holy even as He is holy; and that nevertheless it may be blessed even as He is blessed. Furthermore, this alone is great and good, that a great spirit and a great wisdom look unto, wonder at, and love after, that which is above it, and that the devout image should desire to cleave to its likeness. For man is the image of God, and because it is the image of God it becometh able to understand that it may and ought to cleave unto Him whose image it is. And therefore although an earth is pronounced the body committed to it, yet in the better part of man, I mean memory, understanding, and love, it is more ever to have in conversation in that place whence it knoweth that it hath received all that it is and all that it hath, and wherein it may hope (for as a man may hope it be required not to confound his hoping to that great mystery to abide for everlasting and to attain with the full vision of God to the full fruition of God). Thirdly therefore it remaineth, seeing with men rather that it may quicken men with the life of God unto the seeking and receiving divine things than that it may make them to live with the mortal and human life. For as the body which is quickened standeth in its natural state upright to heaven, which by nature and place and dignity is above all places and all bodies: so the spiritual part by nature it is more ever to lift itself towards that which is more eminent among spiritual things,

[1] *Imaginem. Propinquare ei ex omnem ut fieri; recedere ab ea ad dissimilem ut fiat.* ... *Ire ergo ut appropinquare similis esto. Fiunt ea in anima, § 6, and again in man, § 2. In man, § 5. Ita omnem ea ut ei ita imaginis. Pertinere a homine to God.*

that is towards God and divine things ; not by thinking proudly but by loving faithfully, by living soberly and righteously and godly.[1] And the higher is that whereto it laboureth, the stronger are those studies and exercises wherein it must be exercised ; yet such as it were that shall not drown but dip it, and so affect it that they bring it unto perfection.

52. Now although these studies are sometimes helped by books, and do employ the same, yet they savour not of books, arguments, disputations and chattering, but of things spiritual and peaceable, humble and meet for the humble. And though they be performed outwardly, they are more truly exercised within, in the spirit of the mind, when a man is renewed from day unto day, putting on the new man that is created after God's image in the holiness and the justice of the truth.[2] For there is shapen the mind, there is shapen that good understanding which cometh to them that do after the fear of the Lord,[3] when according to the precept of the Apostle, *in all things we show ourselves to be ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulations, in necessities, in distresses, in labours, in watchings, in the prison* of the cell, *in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth and the power of God ; by the armour of justice to the right hand and to the left ; through honour and dishonour, through evil and good report ; as deceivers and yet true ; as unknown and yet known ; as dying, and lo we live ; as chastised and not slain ;*

[1] Tit. II. 12.
[2] Eph. IV. 24.
[3] Ps. CX. 10.

as sorrowful, yet ever rejoicing; as poor, yet enriching many, as they that have nothing, yet possess all things; [1] *in labour and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness.*[2] These and such as these are the holy studies, the apostolical exercises, wherein the mind searcheth itself and findeth and amendeth, cleansing itself from all defilement of flesh and spirit, accomplishing sanctification in the fear of God. These studies love silence and crave the rest of the heart in the body's labour, poverty of spirit, peace in outward trials, and a good conscience in all purity of heart and body. These make the mind because they have wherewithal to make it. But those vain and frivolous,[3] wordy and contentious, curious and ambitious things distract and corrupt even a holy mind and one that is now perfect. These studies seek not the flowers, but the roots of virtues; not that they may shine forth, but that they may be; not that they may be known, but that they may be possessed.

53. Also they fear more the appetite of vices in themselves than any assault from others, they fear defilement more than malice. For as sometimes by great labour and persevering zeal virtues turn to affections and to a good mind, so the slightest vices by the occasion of a more easy liberty change into a leaven and become as it were natural. Albeit in truth no vice is natural; but virtue is natural to every man. But the custom either of a corrupt will or of negligence suffered to grow within the mind is wont to make many vices as it were natural in the neglectful con-

[1] II Cor. VI. 4–10.
[2] II Cor. XI. 27.
[3] *Nugigerula*, an unusual word which occurs also in *Cant.* 495 C.

science. For custom, as philosophers say, is second nature. Yet in any evil soul before it is hardened its wickedness may be abated ; and even after it is become hard it is not to be despaired of. For this is the curse of Adam, that in the earth of our labouring and in the field of our heart or body, harmful and unprofitable things do ever spring up as weeds unbidden ; but profitable, necessary and healthful things, with labour. Yet virtue, because it is a thing of nature, when at length it cometh into a soul, though it come not without labour, yet cometh into its own place, and sitteth there faithfully, and agreeth well with nature, since it seeketh no reward more than this, to have the knowledge of itself in God. But for vice, though it is believed to be nothing save privation of virtue, yet its iniquity and enormity is oftentimes felt to be such that it doth overwhelm and oppress ; its foulness such, that it defileth and infecteth ; its cleaving so stubborn in custom that nature may scarce shake herself free of it. For every stream of vice is dried up in vain unless the source be stopped. As for example, a slackened will maketh levity of the mind, whence there proceed instability of the mind, inconstancy of manners, vain joy often unto very wantonness of the flesh, vain sorrow sometimes unto sickness of the body, and many other things in neglect or transgression of purpose proceeding from this same vice of levity. So also a will that hath custom to be proud often maketh the soul to be puffed up in great poverty of heart. Whence proceed vainglory, faith in a man's self, neglect of God, boastfulness, disobedience, contempt, presumption, and other plagues of the soul, which

are wont to flow from the swelling of pride and the custom of the same. And in this sort all manner of vices after their kind take their first beginning from some affection of an evil will or using of evil custom; and the longer this hath been suffered to grow within the mind, the more strongly it cleaveth, the stronger remedies it craveth, and the more diligent care it needeth. Such plagues of vices follow the solitary even into the utmost wilderness. And as virtue, being well established within the soul and faithfully abiding therein, forsaketh not him that possesseth it in any multitude soever; so the vice of custom suffereth not him that it possesseth to be free in any solitude soever. For unless that custom be vanquished by stubborn zeal and wise care, it may be abated, but scarcely it may be overcome; and in what way soever the soul order itself, and in what solitude soever it dwell, it suffereth not secrecy and silence of the heart. And the more the using of such custom and will is, the more wicked and rebellious in a man is this that is not a spiritual wickedness but rather a manifold ulcer or hard body of necessity, whereof a man must rid himself with his hands.

54. But return we now to the praise of virtue. What is virtue? The daughter of reason, but more of grace. For by nature it is a kind of force[1]; but that it is virtue,[1] this it holdeth of grace. Force cometh from the judgment of reason that approveth, virtue from the desire of a will that is enlightened. For virtue is a voluntary consenting unto good. Virtue is an evenness of life, in all things agreeing with reason.

[1] *Vis . . . virtus.*

Virtue is a using of free will according to the judgment of reason. Virtue is a humility. Virtue is a patience. Virtue is an obedience. The virtues are prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice and many others; in all of which virtue is nothing else than the using of free will according to the judgment of reason; as hath been said already. For a good will in the soul is the fountain of all good things and mother of all virtues. So on the contrariwise an evil will is the fountain of all evils and vices. Therefore the keeper of his soul ought to be very careful concerning the keeping of his will, that he may wisely understand and discern that which he willeth wholly, or which he ought to will wholly, as the love of God; and that which he ought to will because of that, as the love of his neighbour. For although with God he may safely have no discretion, with his neighbour, love ought always to be careful and prudent, according to the rules of obedience. But in the love of God there is no other intent and no other discretion than this, that as He, *when He loved us, loved us unto the end*,[1] so, if it be possible, we should endlessly love Him, even as the blessed man who delighteth in His commandments without measure.[2]

55. But although the devotion of him that loveth ought to have no end or bound, yet the action of him that worketh ought to have its ends, bounds, and rules. Wherein lest his much good-will go sometimes astray, it is necessary that there be ever present to him (with the mediation of obedience) the truth to keep him.

[1] John XIII. 1.
[2] Ps. CXI. 1.

For unto the good of a man that is advancing to God nothing sorteth so well together as these two things, the will and the truth. These two are they whereof the Lord saith that *if they consent together, whatsoever they ask, it shall be given them by God the Father.*[1] If these two consent perfectly together, they contain in themselves all fulness of virtues without intermixture of vice; they are able to do all in a man that is feeble, they have and possess all in a man that hath nothing; they give, they lend, they bestow, they do service, in the man that resteth with them. Glory and riches [2] are in the conscience of that holy man, of the fruits of his good-will. For without him, not on one side only, as a shield of this world, but on all sides, the shield of the truth of God encompasseth him. Within, his good-will maketh him ever joyful and merry; in his outward action the truth maketh him grave and sober, safe and secure. And therefore that man hath passed beyond human things and is in calm forever, as men say of that air which is above the orb of the moon.

56. The will is a natural desire of the soul, partly unto God, and concerning its own inward things; partly concerning the body, and outward and bodily things. When this tendeth upwards, as fire to its own place, that is when it is joined to truth and moveth towards the things on high, it is love.[3] When it is advanced and suckled by grace, it is dilection. When it apprehendeth, when it holdeth, when it enjoyeth, it

[1] Matt. XVIII. 19.
[2] Ps. CXI. 3.
[3] *Amor . . . sicut vivax flamma et ardens favilla sursum erumpit. De imitatione Christi,* III. 5.

is charity, it is unity of the spirit, it is God; for God is charity.[1] And in these things when a man hath accomplished all, then he beginneth,[2] because there is no full perfection of them in this life. But when it turneth to the things of the flesh, then it is the lust of the flesh; when to curiousness of the world, it is the lust of the eyes; when to seeking of glory and honour, it is the pride of life.[3] Yet so long as it serveth such use or necessity of nature, it is but nature or natural appetite. But when it goeth abroad to superfluous or hurtful things, it is the vice of nature or of the will itself. But by the first desire for these things or the approach of them thou mayest make proof of thyself in this wise. When in the things that regard the body, in necessary things, the will maketh an end of the first desire, it is the natural appetite of the mind. But when in desiring it goeth out ever to things beyond, it betrayeth itself, for now it is less the will than a vice of the will, greed or avarice or some such thing. For in such matters the will is satisfied soon, but the vices thereof are never satisfied.[4]

57. Now in spiritual things and the things to Godward the will, when it willeth that which it can, is to be praised; when it willeth that which it cannot, and more than it can, it is to be governed; when it willeth not that which it can, it is to be awakened and moved thereto. For often if it be not refrained, it breaketh out and plungeth headlong. Often if it be not

[1] 1 John IV. 16.
[2] Ecclus. XVIII. 6.
[3] 1 John II. 16.
[4] With the description of the will in this section compare his *De natura et dignitate amoris*, § 8.

awakened, it slumbereth and tarrieth and forgetteth that place whither it was going, and easily turneth aside into the snares of delight offered unto it. Wherefore as it is wont to happen with the body that the body of a man is better seen by another than by himself, so in these things also another's eye seeth us often better than our own; and another man that is not in like fervour of the same will is often a juster judge of an action; because often either through neglectfulness or through secret love of ourselves we mistake concerning ourselves. Therefore a good keeper of the will is obedience, whether it be of necessary command or of counsel; whether of subjection, or of charity alone. For to their equals or to their inferiors, as saith the Apostle Peter, the sons of obedience more purely and more sweetly chasten their hearts in the obedience of charity than they subject them to their betters through the obedience of necessity.[1] For in that charity alone prescribeth and counselleth, and charity obeyeth; but here it feareth punishment, or stern authority threateneth it, and a timorous necessity. In that, he that obeyeth winneth often a greater glory; in this, a greater penalty is ever threatened to him that obeyeth not. Therefore in a man that lifteth his heart upwards it is manifest to all how necessary to the will is this keeping, both for the ruling, governing and disposing of his outward things and more especially for the sake of his inward things. For when the mind thinketh, whether on itself or on God, the will is the beginner of all its thinking; and on this beginning of the will followeth of necessity the whole tenour of thinking.

[1] *Cf.* 1 Pet. 1. 22; v. 2, 3.

58. For there are three things that make thought: will, memory and understanding. The will compelleth the memory to bring forth its matter, it compelleth the understanding also to shape that which is brought forth, bringing understanding to the memory that it may be shapen thence, and to the understanding the keen gaze of him that thinketh, that thence he may think. Now because the will compelleth these and bringeth them together into one, and with a ready authority joineth them, therefore *cogitatio*, that is thinking, seemeth to have taken its name from *cogere*, that is compelling.[1] Hence arise all thoughts, whether good and holy and worthy of God, or evil and perverse, which do separate from God, or idle and vain, wherefrom God taketh Himself away. And therefore it is said that *perverse thoughts do separate from God*, and that *the Holy Spirit taketh Himself away from thoughts that are without understanding*.[2] In which words it is to be observed that without some understanding can be no thinking, and that no thinking is altogether without understanding. But there is one understanding that cometh of the force of natural reason and another from the virtue of a rational mind. Now the understanding itself is the same, which whether it be applied to God or whether to evil, hath a certain natural force; but it is one thing if it be left to itself, another if it be enlightened by grace. The one denieth not itself to the things of the world, be they vain or sober; the other fasteneth itself only to worthy things and

[1] *Cogo*, I bring together or compel; *cogito*, I think. The same derivation appears in St. Augustine, *Conf.* 10, 11, 18.
[2] Wisd. 1. 3, 5.

those that are like unto itself. The one worketh often as being left to itself, and touched with vice from a vice of the reason and of a corrupt will, weaving perverse thoughts, whereby a man that thinketh on himself doth wilfully sever him from God; the other as being always enlightened, and drawn unto virtue, worketh godliness, which uniteth the thinker unto God.

59. Now those thoughts without understanding which are set in the second place, are of themselves vain and idle, applying themselves to neither sort of understanding in the intention of him that thinketh, not indeed destroying suddenly but softly and slowly corrupting, occupying the time, hindering necessary things, and defiling the mind; not so much thoughts as images of thoughts from true or imagined remembrances, or those remembrances themselves, in manifold wise welling up of themselves from the memory. In which there seemeth to be a suffering rather than a doing of the will, seeing that there is in them no intention of the thinker; and that which of itself springeth up in the memory offereth itself to be shapen to an understanding that heedeth not, and whatsoever is done seemeth rather to be done in the dream of one that sleepeth than in the awakened sight of one that thinketh. And in this, though it is not desired by the thinker to cast out the Holy Spirit from him, yet being negligent he doth it by his fault, so that the spirit of discipline rightly fleeth away from thoughts undisciplined. And though these proceed from a certain secret force of the reason, in truth they are not of the reason, so that the understanding is drawn unto them,

since there is in them no assent of him that understandeth. But when in sober wise a man thinketh of sober things, the will by its freedom calleth forth from the memory whatsoever it needeth, and bringeth the understanding to the memory to shape it, and whatsoever is shapen, the understanding bringeth it to the thinking sight, and so the business of thought is perfectly accomplished.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

HE EXPLAINETH THE THIRD GRADE OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE, THAT IS THE SPIRITUAL

6. Now when a man thinketh of those things that are of God or unto God, and the will advanceth so far that it becometh love, incontinently by the way of love the Holy Spirit infuseth Himself, the spirit of life, and He quickeneth all things, aiding in prayer and in meditation and in discourse the infirmity of him that thinketh. And straightway the memory becometh wisdom, when the good things of God savour sweetly unto it; and the thought which cometh of them it bringeth to the understanding to be shapen in affection. And the understanding of the thinker becometh the contemplation of the lover, and shaping the thought into experience of spiritual or heavenly sweetness it toucheth therewith the sharp sight of him that thinketh, so that it becometh the bliss of him that enjoyeth. And then he thinketh of God well, according to human measure; if that may be called thinking wherein nothing compelleth or is compelled,[1] but all is exultation and jubilation unto the memory of the overflowing of the sweetness of God, and true tasting of Him in goodness by him who in simplicity of the heart hath sought Him. After this manner of

[1] See note on p. 100.

thinking of God standeth not in the will of him that thinketh but in the grace of Him that giveth; that is when the Holy Spirit who breatheth where He will, when He will, in what manner He will and on whom He will, breatheth upon this man. But it belongeth to the man ever to make his heart ready, by freeing the will from strange affections, the reason and understanding from all manner of care, the memory from idle, and busy, and sometimes also from necessary occupations; that in the good day of the Lord and in the hour of His pleasure, when he heareth the voice of the Spirit that breatheth, those things that make thought may lightly run unto each other and work together for good, preparing as it were a feast together unto the joy of him that thinketh; the will bringing a pure affection unto the joy of the Lord; the memory, a faithful matter; the understanding, the sweetness of experience.

61. So therefore the will being neglected maketh idle thoughts and unworthy of God; being corrupted, perverse thoughts that separate from God; being upright, thoughts necessary to the use of this life; being godly, thoughts effectual to the fruit of the Spirit and to the enjoying of God. Now *the fruits of the Spirit*, as the Apostle saith, *are charity, peace, joy, patience, long-suffering, goodness, kindness, meekness, faith, modesty, continence, chastity.*[1] And in every manner of thinking, all things that come to the mind of the thinker are conformed to the intention of the will; for the mercy and justice of God work therein, that *the just man may be justified still and the filthy be filthy*

[1] Gal. v. 22, 23.

still.[1] Therefore the man that will love God, or that loveth Him already, must take counsel of his own mind and examine his conscience, to see what thing it is that he willeth generally and wherefore he willeth it; and what else he willeth or hateth, and his flesh contrariwise desireth. For thoughts which fall in as it were from without and pass out again, and fleeting motions of will whereby now he willeth and now he willeth not, are commonly to be reckoned not among motions of will, but as idle thoughts. For though they sometimes proceed even to delectation of the mind, yet that mind which is master of itself doth soon shake itself free of them. But with that which he willeth generally, it must first be considered what it is that he so willeth, next, how much, and in what manner he willeth. If that which he willeth generally be God, he must examine how much and in what manner[2] he willeth Him, whether it be unto the despising of himself and of all things that are or may be; and this not only by the judgment of the reason but by the affection of the mind, so that the will become more than will, so that it be love, so that it be dilection, so that it be charity, so that it be unity of the spirit. For in this manner is God to be loved. For a mighty will unto God is love; dilection, the cleaving or uniting; charity, the enjoying. But unity of the spirit in a man that upward lifteth his heart is the perfection of the will that advanceth unto God, when now he not only willeth that which God willeth, but is so much, I say not affected, but perfected in affection, that he is not able

[1] Apoc. xxii. 11.
[2] Mabillon leaves out "and in what manner."

to will anything save that which God willeth. For to will that which God willeth is to be now like unto God; but to be unable to will anything save that which God willeth, this is to be that which God is, in whom to will and to be are the same.[1] Wherefore it is well said that then *we shall see Him fully as He is, when we shall be like Him*[2]; that is, when we shall be that which He is. For to them to whom the power is given to become the sons of God,[3] to them it is given, not indeed that they be God, yet that they be that which God is, that they be holy now and that hereafter they be fully blessed, which God is. And that they be holy here and shall be blessed there, cometh only of God, who is both their holiness and their bliss.[4]

62. And this is the perfection of man, likeness to God.[5] Now not to will to be perfect, is to fail. Wherefore unto this perfection the will is ever to be fed, and love to be made ready: the will to be governed, that it be not wasted in other things; love to be kept, that it be not defiled. For unto this alone were we created

[1] Citing these two sentences Pourrat (*La spiritualité chrétienne*, II., p. 196) is quite sure that the author—whoever he may be—teaches the dangerous doctrine that the mystical union makes a soul impeccable. But the sentences should not be divorced from their context in the *Epistle*, or from their author, William of St. Thierry, a theologian of the most sensitive orthodoxy. The question is discussed at length in the Introduction. See also the notes to the next section.

[2] 1 John III. 2.

[3] John I. 12.

[4] That is to say that their present sanctity, of whatever degree, is entirely dependent upon the grace of God; and if in their holiness they are like to God, fulfilling the command: *Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy*, yet their holiness remains the holiness of the creature.

[5] See the references to St. Augustine cited at section 51 and the Introduction.

and live, that we be like to God; for to the image of God were we created. Now there is one likeness of God which no man living leaveth save when he leaveth to live, a likeness which the Creator of all men hath left to every man to be a witness that he hath lost a better and worthier likeness; this likeness every man hath whether he will or no, whether he be able to conceive it or whether he be so dull that he cannot conceive it; and this likeness is that even as God is in all places, and in all places is wholly, in His creation, so is every living soul in its own body. And as God that is Himself unchanging, in an unchanging manner worketh unlikeness in His creation; so the soul of man, though it quickeneth the whole body by an unchanging life, yet in the senses of the body and in the thoughts of the heart, in an unchanging manner, continually worketh unlikeness. This likeness of God in a man is of no weight with God as respecting his merit, seeing that it cometh of nature and not of his own will or toil. But there is another likeness more near to God—for it is voluntary—which consisteth in virtues; wherein the soul by the greatness of its virtue longeth to imitate as it were the greatness of the Sovereign Good, and by continual perseverance in good to imitate the unchangeableness of His eternity. But above this is yet another likeness to God. This is that whereof we have spoken already somewhat; so very true a likeness that it is named not likeness now, but unity of the spirit; when a man becometh one spirit with God, not only in unity of willing the same thing, but by a more express unity of virtue (as hath been said) so that he is not able to will any other thing

It is called unity of the spirit not only because the Holy Spirit maketh it, or draweth unto it the spirit of man, but because it is itself the Holy Spirit, God and Love; for through Him who is the love of the Father and the Son, the unity, the sweetness, the good, the kiss, the embrace, and whatsoever may be common to both in that perfect unity of truth and truth of unity, man after his measure possesseth as towards God that which with unity of substance the Son possesseth as towards the Father, and the Father as towards the Son; when in the embrace and kiss of the Father and the Son the blessed mind findeth itself as it were in the midst [1]; when in an unspeakable and unthinkable manner the man of God is found worthy, not indeed to become God; but that which God is by nature, man becometh by grace.[2]

63. Wherefore in the list of spiritual exercises the Apostle in his wisdom hath set the Holy Spirit, saying: *In chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Spirit, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God.*[3] See how he setteth the Holy Spirit in the midst of good virtues, as it were the heart in the midst of the body, making all things, ordering all things, quickening all things. For He is the

[1] *Cum in amplexu et osculo Patris et Filii mediam quodammodo se invenit beata conscientia.* Compare *Speculum*, 394 B: *in amplexu et osculo Patris et Filii, qui Spiritus sanctus est, hominem quodammodo invenire se medium.* This section of the *Epistle* could be fairly described as a *précis* of *Speculum*, 391–394.

[2] Pourrat cites this passage also (*op. cit.*, p. 195) and finds in it a savour of pantheism. The charge is discussed at length in the Introduction, but we may be allowed to say here that the passage is as much, and as little, pantheistic as St. Paul's: *He that cleaveth to the Lord is one spirit* (1 Cor. vi. 17).

[3] II Cor. vi. 6, 7.

almighty Maker that createth the good-will of man to God, and maketh the propitiation of God to man; He shapeth affection, He giveth virtue, He helpeth working, doing all things mightily and disposing all things sweetly.[1] He quickeneth the spirit of man and holdeth it together in one; even as man quickeneth his body and holdeth it together in one. And though men may teach how to seek God, and angels how to adore, it is He alone that teacheth to find, to possess, and to enjoy. For He is the care of him that well seeketh, and the godliness of him that in spirit and in truth adoreth, and the wisdom of him that findeth, and the love of him that possesseth, and the bliss of him that enjoyeth.[2] Yet whatsoever of the vision and knowledge of God is given to the faithful here, is but a glass and a riddle,[3] as far removed from the vision and knowledge that shall be as faith from truth or time from eternity; save when that sometimes cometh to pass which is read of Him in the book of Job: *Who hideth the light in His hands, and biddeth it to rise again, and declareth concerning it to His beloved that it is his possession and that he may reach thereto.*[4]

64. For to the elect and beloved of God there is shown sometimes and momently as it were a light of the countenance of God (even as a light enclosed in a man's hands shineth forth and is hidden again at the will of him that holdeth it), so that by that which it is

[1] Wisd. VIII. 1.

[2] The author's devotion to the Holy Spirit is manifest throughout his writings. See the eloquent peroration of his *Enigma Fidei*. And his doctrine regarding the work of the Holy Spirit is already clearly expressed in his Meditations, *e.g.*, VI. 224 B.

[3] 1 Cor. XIII. 12.

[4] Job XXXVI. 32, 33.

suffered to see in a flash or point of time the soul may be kindled unto the full possessing of everlasting light and heirship of the full vision of God. And that the soul may know in a manner that which it yet lacketh, a flash of grace doth dazzle sometimes the senses of the lover and snatcheth him from himself and ravisheth him to the Day that Is,[1] from the tumult of things into the bliss of silence, and showeth him so far as he may bear it, for a moment and point of time, That which Is, as It is ; and for a while joineth him also to That which Is, so that after his own manner he is that which It is.[2] And when he hath learnt there the difference between that which is clean and that which is unclean, he is taken back to himself, and is made to return to cleanse his heart unto seeing and to shape his soul unto likeness ; so that if ever he be received again within he may be more pure to seeing and more stable to enjoying.[3] For nowhere doth the

[1] *Et rapit in diem qui est.* This is the day of eternity, which he apostrophises in his exposition on the Canticle (537) in words which are an appropriate commentary on this passage : "*O dies dierum, dies virtutis, dies super dies, dies qui es et non deficis.*" Compare the *Imitation of Christ*, Book III., Chap. XLVIII., *De die æternitatis*. Dom Berlière (*L'ascèse bénédictine*, pp. 123–124) finds characteristic of the old monastic asceticism this fervent desire for heaven, and after giving several instances, adds : "*Peut-on pousser un cri, sorti des profondeurs de l'âme d'un Guillaume de St. Thierry, qui trahisse avec plus d'éloquence cette nostalgie du ciel : O patrie, patrie, que je vois de loin et que je salue.*" He is quoting from William's ninth Meditation : *O patria, patria, quam de longe video et saluto.*

[2] Compare St. Augustine : *Mens mea pervenit ad id quod est in ictu trepidantis aspectus* (*Conf.* VII., 23).

[3] In *Speculum Fidei* (395) is a passage which expresses the pain of the soul that is banished from the vision to the work of making itself more clean, and at the same time its recognition of the justice of that banishment and its patience in the discipline of purgation. For the necessity of purity of soul, see also *Med.* 217 D, and the last section of this *Epistle*.

mode of human imperfection become more manifest to itself than in the light of the countenance of God and glass of the divine vision; where in the Day that Is, seeing more and more that which it lacketh, it amendeth daily by likeness that wherein it faileth through unlikeness; coming nigh by likeness to Him from whom it hath strayed by unlikeness; and so on the more express vision followeth ever the more express likeness. For it is impossible that the Sovereign Good should be seen and not loved; or not loved as much as it hath been suffered to be seen; till love advance to some likeness of that love which did make God like to man in the humility of human estate to the end that He might make man like to God in the glory of the partaking of the divine. And then it becometh sweet to a man to share the humility of the sovereign majesty, to share the poverty of the Son of God, to be conformed to the divine wisdom, feeling the same thing within himself as in Our Lord Christ Jesus.

65. For this is wisdom with piety, this is love with fear, this is exultation with trembling, when we conceive and understand God humbling Himself to death, and that the death of the Cross,[1] to the end that He might exalt man unto the likeness of divinity. Hence floweth the stream of the river that maketh glad the city of God,[2] the memory of the overflowing of His sweetness[3] in understanding and in thinking on His good things towards us. Wherein though a man is easily led to the loving of God by weighing or con-

[1] Phil. II. 8.
[2] Ps. XLV. 5.
[3] Ps. CXLIV. 7. See note on § 29.

templating His amiable things, which shine forth of themselves in the affection of him that contemplateth, His might, His virtues, His glory, majesty, goodness and blessedness; yet this chiefly draweth the lover unto the Beloved, that He is Himself whatsoever is to be loved in Him, Who is all that is, if indeed where no part is there may be all. And to this good by love of this good the godly affection so striveth that it will not be called back thence until it be made one thing or one spirit with it. And when this is accomplished in a soul, nothing then save the veil of this mortality divideth it and keepeth it from the holy of holies and that sovereign and supercelestial blessedness: but when in faith and the hope of Him that it loveth it already enjoyeth in thought that blessedness, it tarrieth with a more patient forbearance for what remaineth of this life.[1]

66. This is the intent of the strife of the solitary, this the end, this the prize, this the rest from labours and consolation of pains.[2] This is man's true perfection and very wisdom; embracing and containing in itself all virtues, not gathered in from without, but as it were naturally grafted in itself, unto that likeness of God whereby it is that which it is. For even as God is That Which Is, so with respect to the good of virtue, the estate of a good will is so confirmed and

[1] With *jam solo mortalitatis hujus velo dividitur ac differtur a sanctis sanctorum* compare *solo mortalitatis hujus interposito velo . . . separatur a cœlestibus, hoc est a sancto sanctorum* (*Cant.* 513 C). The same idea in different words in *Cant.* 529 D: *ut solus dividat paries hujus mortalitatis;* and *Cant.* 530 C: *solo . . . interstitio humanæ mortalitatis.*

[2] With this section compare *Cont.*, § 10: *Hic est finis, hæc est consummatio, hæc est perfectio,* etc.

set fast into the being a good mind that because of its fervent cleaving to the unchangeable good it seemeth now utterly unable to be changed from that which it is.[1] For when the man of God is in this manner taken up on high by the Lord our King, the Holy One of Israel,[2] the wise and godly soul by grace that aideth it and enlighteneth it in the contemplation of the Sovereign Good doth behold the very laws of unchangeable truth, in so far as it is worthy to reach unto them by the understanding of love; and thereafter it shapeth for itself a manner of holy conversation and pattern of sanctity. For it beholdeth sovereign truth, and those things that by it are true; sovereign goodness, and those things that by it are good; sovereign eternity, and those things that by it have being.[3] To that truth, that charity, that eternity it conformeth itself, in them it ordereth itself; it flieth not above them in judgment but gazeth up to them with desire or cleaveth to them with love; gazing up to them, conforming and shaping itself to them, yet not without the judgment of discretion, not without the searching of reasoning and the judgment of reason. And from this are conceived and born holy virtues; the image of God is reshapen again in man and that life of God is ordered in him whereto the Apostle complaineth

[1] See the notes on §§ 61 and 62, and the Introduction.

[2] *Cum enim fit circa hominem Dei assumptio illa Domini et Sancti Israel regis nostri. . . .* Compare *Speculum* 392 A: *Hæc enim assumptio Domini et Sancti Israel regis nostri*, about the same experience.

[3] The printed editions and MSS. generally have *summam æternitatem et quæ ex ea sunt*, where one would expect the phrase to end with *æterna*, and so be parallel to the others. The St. John's *MS.* has *summam essentiam*, etc., which is a plausible reading, but in the next sentence has *æternitate* like the rest.

that some men have been made strangers [1]; the strength of virtue is gathered together in him, and those two things wherein consisteth the perfection both of life contemplative and of life active; whereof according to these ancient Interpreters [2] it is read in Job, *Lo, piety is wisdom; and to abstain from evil is knowledge.* For wisdom is piety, that is the serving of God, the love whereby we desire to see Him, and seeing Him *in a glass and in riddle* [3] do believe and hope; and do advance unto this, that we may see Him revealed openly. But to abstain from evil is the knowledge of temporal things wherein we live; in which we abstain from evil in so far forth as we pursue good.

67. To this knowledge and this abstinence it is manifest that the exercise of all virtues looketh, and with it the discipline of all the arts of this life wherein we are. The one, that is the pursuit of virtue, seemeth to regard rather the things above, which hold forth the virtue of the wisdom that is above, and savour of the sweetness thereof. The other, which regardeth bodily exercises, unless it be bound with the bond of faith, declineth unto the vanity of things below. Wherein, although knowledge be a thing comprehended either by the reason or the bodily senses, and committed unto the memory, yet if the thing be rightly considered, that is properly accounted to be knowledge which we apprehend by the senses. But that which

[1] Eph. iv. 18.

[2] The translators of the LXX.; Job xxviii. 28.

[3] *Per speculum in ænigmate* (1 Cor. xiii. 12). William used this text to provide titles for two of his treatises and cites it very frequently. Nothing is clearer to him than the limitations of our knowledge and the necessity of faith.

in such matters the reason of itself apprehendeth is that wherein knowledge and wisdom meet. For whatsoever is learnt from without, that is, through the bodily senses, is as it were a foreign thing and a chance, taken into the mind. But that which cometh into the mind of itself, whether through force of reason or from a natural understanding of the unchangeable laws of unchangeable truth, so that even the most ungodly men do sometimes happen to judge most rightly, this is inborn in the reason in such manner that it is indeed the reason itself; nor for this knowledge hath it any need of teaching, but (whether by the admonishing of another or by its own memory) it knoweth it for its natural possession. And this thing is chiefly shown in this, that what is known of God by the natural revelation of God is manifest to every man, be he never so ungodly. Also a certain striving after virtues is natural, so that the heathen poet might say thereof:

"For virtue's love the good forbear to sin."[1]

Moreover, all discerning of rational things cometh of the enquiry of reasonings. But the lowest part of knowledge, which tendeth downward, is the bodily feeling of sensible things which cometh by the five senses of the body, and by lust, and by experience of the flesh or of the eyes or of the pride of this life.

68. Therefore when reason being conformed to wisdom shapeth the conscience to itself and ordereth the life, in the things beneath it fitteth unto itself the servi-

[1] *Oderunt peccare boni virtutis amore* (Horace *Ep.* I., 16, 52). He cites the same line in *Cont.*, § 18 and in *Cant.* 509 D.

tude of knowledge and the sufficiency of nature, in reasonings and rational things the order of life, in the showing of virtues the form of conscience. And thus being advanced by the things below and aided by the things above, going forward unto righteousness, by the judgment of reason, by the assent of the will, by the affection of the mind and the effect of working it hasteneth to attain freedom and unity of the spirit: that (as hath often now been said) the faithful man may be made one spirit with God. And this is that same life of God whereof we spoke a little before, which is not an advancing of the reason but rather a love of the savoury things of perfection.[1] For because they savour unto him that savoureth them, therefore he is wise; because he hath been made one spirit with God, therefore he is spiritual. And this is the perfection of a man in this life.

69. For he that before was sole or solitary, becometh now one; and solitude of the body turneth for him unto unity of the mind. And there is fulfilled in him that which the Lord prayed for His disciples in the summary of all perfection, saying: *Father, I would that as Thou and I are one, so they may be one in Us.*[2] For this is the uniting of man with God, or his likeness to God; in so far as he cometh nigh to God, in so far he conformeth his lower part unto himself, and his lowest part unto that; so that spirit and mind and body being ordered after their right manner, disposed in their own places and reckoned after their just

[1] *I.e.*, not so much an affair of reason as of love, and a wisdom rather than a knowledge. There is a play upon the two senses of *sapere:* to "savour," and to "be wise."

[2] John xvii. 11, 21.

deserts, may also be thought of according to their own properties; that a man may begin perfectly to know himself, and through knowing of himself to advance and ascend unto the knowledge of God. Whither when the affection of him that advanceth beginneth first to rise and aspire, that which is chiefly to be eschewed in the thought of this likeness is the error of unlikeness; that by comparing the spiritual things with the spiritual, the divine with the divine, he may have no other thought of them than the truth.[1] The mind therefore that thinketh on the likeness of God and itself must first shape and form its thought unto this, that it utterly flee to think of itself according to the body; or of God either according to the body, as though He were contained in any place, or again according to the spirit, as though He might suffer change. For things that are spiritual are as different from the quality and nature of bodies as they are removed from all circumscription of place. But things that are divine are as much more eminent either than bodily or than spiritual things as they are free not only from any law of place or of time but from all suspicion of mutability; for they abide incommutable and everlasting in the bliss of their incommutability and everlastingness. Wherein as the mind discerneth by the bodily senses those things that are bodily, so it may not discern those things that are rational or spiritual save by itself. But the things that are of God the understanding may not seek or expect save from God. Albeit of some things which regard

[1] Compare the warning in *Speculum* (394 and 396) against incorrect ideas of God.

God, it is both lawful and possible for a man that hath reason to think sometimes and enquire; as of the sweetness of His goodness, the power of His might, and other such. But that which He is in Himself, and His essence, may in no manner be conceived save in so far as the sense of love enlightened may reach thereto.

70. Yet we are to believe of God in this wise, and as far as the Holy Spirit aideth we are to think on Him also in this wise: He is an everlasting life, living and life-giving, unchangeable, making all changeable things after an unchangeable manner, understanding, and creating every understanding and creature that understandeth, a wisdom making wise every creature that is wise, a truth that is fixed, that standeth fast and that turneth not aside, whereby all things are true that are true, and wherein the causes of all things that come to pass in time have an everlasting being. And to Him life is very essence and very nature; and He is a life living to Himself, very divinity, eternity, greatness, goodness and virtue existing and subsisting in itself, passing beyond all place by virtue of His nature that knoweth not place, and by His eternity all time that may be comprehended, whether by reason or imagination: which is a far more true and surpassing thing than may be felt in any manner of feeling. Yet He is more surely attained by the feeling of humble enlightened love than by any conceiving of the reason,[1]

[1] *Certius tamen sensu humilis et illuminati amoris quam quolibet cogitatu rationis attingitur.* This is William's deepest conviction, that "love may reach to God in this life, but not knowing" as it is expressed in the *Cloud of Unknowing*. *Amor illuminatus* is the instrument of this knowledge. *Cf. Speculum*, 395 D and 396.

and is ever better than may be conceived; nevertheless He may be better conceived than spoken of. For He is the Sovereign Essence from which all being proceedeth; He is the Sovereign Substance that falleth under no predication of words; but the subsisting principle and cause of all things, wherein our being dieth not, our understanding erreth not, our love is offended not; who is ever sought that He may the more sweetly be found, and most sweetly found that he may the more diligently be sought.

71. He therefore that would see this unspeakable (for only unspeakably is it seen), let him cleanse his heart; for by no bodily likeness to one sleeping, by no bodily vision to one waking, by no searching of the reason may it be seen or apprehended, but only by the clean heart of a humble lover. For this is the face of the Lord which no man may see and live to this world[1]; this is the vision after which sigheth every creature that laboureth to love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind and with all his might. Whereto he ceaseth not also to stir his neighbour, if he love him as himself. Whereunto when he is sometimes suffered to enter, in the very light of truth he seeth past doubting the grace that runneth before; when he is cast out therefrom, in the midst of his blindness he seeth that his uncleanness may not be borne by that purity. And if

The same doctrine of the pre-eminence of love is held by the Victorines, St. Bernard, and St. Bonaventure. *Intrat amor dum scientia foris stat.*

[1] Ex. xxxiii. 20. That the vision of God is not possible in this life is argued in *Enigma*, 399–400, and elsewhere. He speaks here of the mystical fruition.

he be a true lover, he thinketh it sweet to weep [1] and not without much groaning is he compelled to return to the knowledge of himself. And though to conceive this unspeakable we be all unable, yet doth our Beloved pardon us; for though we confess that of Him we may not worthily speak or think, yet to that speaking and that thinking we are stirred and drawn by the love of Him or love of the love of Him.[2] Wherefore it is the part of him that thinketh to humble himself in all things, to glorify in himself the Lord his God, to become as nought to himself in the contemplation of God, to be subject to every human creature for love of the Creator; to present his body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, his reasonable service; and above all things not to be more wise than he ought to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety; and according to the measure of faith God giveth him [3] not to show forth his good things before the face of man, but to hide them in his cell and to lay them up in his conscience; that both on his cell and on the forehead of his conscience he may have this title written: *My secret is to myself, my secret is to myself.*[4]

[1] *Et si amat, flere dulce habet.* See the note on § 64. In another expression of the "sweet sorrow" of this exile he uses the same words: *flere dulce habet* (*Enigma*, 400 D). *Cf.* also *Med.* 230 D and 235 B for the same use of *dulce habere*.

[2] See his twelfth Meditation in which he examines his love of God and believes he can at least say: "I have love of Thy love," and answer our Lord's question, "Lovest thou Me?" with a humble "I wish to love Thee." He describes in charming terms his love for the true lovers of God, whose devotion he envies.

[3] Rom. xii. 1, 3.

[4] *Secretum meum mihi, secretum meum mihi.* Is. xxiv. 16.

THE END

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